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THE HEIMSKRINGLA.

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SAMUEL LAING.

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*VOLUME THE FIRST.*





THE HEIMSKRINGLA  
OR  
THE SAGAS OF  
THE NORSE KINGS

*FROM THE ICELANDIC OF SNORRE STURLASON*

BY

SAMUEL LAING, Esq.

*SECOND EDITION, REVISED, WITH NOTES*

BY

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UNITED STATES MINISTER TO DENMARK

AUTHOR OF "NORSE MYTHOLOGY," "VIKING TALES OF THE NORTH," AND OTHER WORKS

With Two Maps

*IN FOUR VOLUMES*

VOLUME THE FIRST

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TO  
*WILLIAM F. VILAS,*  
SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,  
THIS EDITION OF  
SNORRE'S "HEIMSKRINGLA"

IS  
Dedicated

BY  
HIS GRATEFUL FRIEND,

*R. B. ANDERSON.*



"In this as in other things let us cry: *England for English! Scandinavia for Scandinavians! THE NORTH FOR THE NORTHMEN!*"—Prof. Dr. George Stephens, in *RUNIC MONUMENTS*, vol. i. p. 20.

"In comparison with his contemporaries, Snorre's broader views and keen statesmanlike tact are certainly remarkable, and every page of his historical works attests his sympathy with the political life and his possession of the peculiar qualities necessary for a ruler of men. Able to value at its real worth the careful truthseeking of Ase, he yet takes his own path as an historian; seizing on character and situation with the truest dramatic feeling; letting his heroes speak for themselves; working boldly and vigorously, but with the surest skill; and so creating works which for deep political insight, truth of conception, vividness of colour, and knowledge of mankind, must ever retain their place beside the masterpieces of the greatest historians."—Dr. GUDBRAND VIGFUSSEN.

"The crown of Icelandic historiography is SNORRE STURLASON'S *HEIMSKRINGLA*, which towers above all other Icelandic histories like a splendid tree above the low brushwood."—Dr. FREDERIK WINKEL HORN.

"From whatever point of view, therefore, we consider the relations which exist between England and Iceland, whether from that of primordial affinity and a community of race, religion, and law, or from that of connection by commerce, immigration, or conquest, we shall find the two languages and peoples so closely bound together, that whatever throws light on the beliefs, institutions, and customs of the one, must necessarily illustrate and explain those of the other. Nor should it be forgotten that in the tenth and eleventh centuries the Icelanders were foremost in the history of the time. They were at once the most learned and the boldest and most adventurous of men. From Iceland they pushed on to Greenland and America, and their ships swarmed in commerce or in viking voyages on all the seas. At the courts of kings and earls, whether Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, or Anglo-Saxon, they were welcome guests, for though none were more dreaded as foes, none were more greeted as friends for their gifts of wit and song."—Dr. GEORGE WEBER DASENT.

## INTRODUCTION.

IN his interesting little book, "The Early Kings of Norway," the distinguished writer, Thomas Carlyle, says that Snorre Sturlason's *HEIMSKRINGLA* "deserves, were it once well edited, furnished with accurate maps, chronological summaries, &c., to be reckoned among the great history-books of the world." The Swedish language actually possesses such an edition of this great historical work in the elegant and scholarly translation by Hans Olaf Hildebrand, who is now Riks-Antiquary of Sweden. It is in three volumes, published at Orebro (1869-1871), and furnished with an elaborate introduction, with summaries, commentaries, notes, a chronological table, a map, and a complete index. Hildebrand is a man of profound literary insight and remarkable diligence. He is one of the chief authorities in regard to Scandinavian archæology, and has thus been able to make a careful study of both the antiquities and the topography of the olden North; nor has he failed to examine any collateral record or any foreign chronology that could be of service in elucidating Snorre's *Heimskringla*. In short, we have in Hildebrand's Swedish translation a monumental edition, which

could not have failed to delight and satisfy Carlyle's heart, had he become acquainted with it.

The present editor and reviser of Samuel Laing's translation of Snorre's chronicle lays no claim to that erudition which shines on every page of Hildebrand's work. He does not hesitate to confess that he came to Copenhagen, not to teach others, but to learn himself; he came to the Athens of the North, not as a master but as a disciple, eager to sit at the feet of the great scholars of Scandinavia, in order that he might return to his native country with more knowledge of that weird North, from whose "frozen loins" poured the vikings of the Middle Ages—with more knowledge of that grand old Scandinavia, which was destined to become the mother of England and the grandmother of America. How eminently fitting that the child and the grandchild should listen to the words of wisdom that in times past have fallen from the lips of their mother and grandmother! An acquaintance with the ancient runes, with the Eddas, with the *Heimskringla*, and with all the old sagalore, should be the pride of every Englishman and American.

In assuming the revision of this great historical work the editor did not conceive it to be within his province to examine old manuscripts and make original researches, or to criticise the scholars of the North. He deemed his task well done if he should succeed in gathering the ripest fruits and best results of the specialists in this field, and in incorporating and dovetailing them into a new edition of Laing's

translation, thus bringing the latter, if possible, up to the standard of modern scholarship. Nor does he flatter himself that his ambitious object has been attained, but will think himself amply rewarded for his labour if the verdict passed upon his work shall be, that the present edition is, in some respects at least, an improvement upon that by Mr. Laing in 1844.

To Samuel Laing belongs the imperishable fame of having made the first translation of the *Heimskringla* into the English tongue, and his work has been of great service to many a historian, scholar, and poet. Carlyle is chiefly indebted to him for his "Early Kings of Norway," and Laing's *Heimskringla* inspired several of Longfellow's best poems. We should not fail to give honour to whom honour is due. We must not forget that Bishop Percy published a translation of Mallet's *Northern Antiquities* in 1770, that A. T. Cottle attempted a translation of the *Elder Edda* in 1797, but bear in mind that these men were pioneers, pathfinders, and laboured under immense difficulties. The modern Icelandic scholar has Vigfusson's *Icelandic-English Dictionary*, and many other excellent aids which were unknown in former generations. All the more credit is therefore due to such pioneers as George Stephens, George Webbe Dasent, Samuel Laing, Benjamin Thorpe, Dr. Carlyle, Sir Edmund Head, Robert Lowe, and William Morris, in England; and to such men as Longfellow, George P. Marsh, and Willard Fiske, in America, for mastering the spirit of Norse history and literature.

From this point of view it seemed to the present publisher and editor peculiarly fitting to make Laing's translation the basis of a new edition of the *Heimskringla*, to retain his honoured name in connection therewith, and to make at the same time such eliminations, additions and corrections, as the lapse of time and the progress of knowledge have made necessary.

In the performance of this task the reviser has made more or less use of all the later editions and translations of the *Heimskringla*, and he is under special obligations to Prof. C. R. Unger's edition of the original text, and to P. A. Munch's and H. O. Hildebrand's translations into Norwegian and Swedish. Many of Laing's foot-notes which seemed obsolete or irrelevant have been omitted, and an L. has been added to all those which have been retained. A considerable number of new notes have been substituted and added, and for the greater number of these the editor is indebted to Hildebrand, whose chronology has also invariably been adopted. Anent the fixing of the dates of events in old Scandinavian history, all Norse scholars owe much to "*TÍMATAL*," a treatise on the chronology of the earlier Icelandic history by the late Gudbrand Vigfusson, one of the foremost old Norse scholars of this century. His "*Lives of the Early Bishops of Iceland*" (1858), his edition of Cleasby's "*Icelandic-English Dictionary*" (1874), his "*Sturlunga Saga with Prolegomena*" (1878); and his "*Corpus Poeticum Boreale*" (1883) are enduring monuments of Vigfusson's great learn-

ing, and mark a new epoch in the study of Scandinavian history and literature in the world generally, and in England and America particularly.

The chief features of the revision may be classified and described as follows :—

1. Chapters, paragraphs, sentences, and words have been eliminated here and there, and others have been substituted or added, in order to make the translation as now presented correspond with Prof. C. R. Unger's text-edition published in Christiania in 1868. From Vigfusson a thoroughly revised text-edition was expected, but Unger's is the best hitherto published.

2. Laing's irrelevant notes have been omitted, and many new notes have been added. The new ones have been gleaned from various sources, but chiefly from Hildebrand's Swedish translation of the *Heimskringla*.

3. The orthography of names of persons and places has been thoroughly revised. With this part of the work the editor is not himself entirely satisfied. He admits that he is guilty of several inconsistencies; but the jewel of consistency in regard to the orthography of old Norse names has not yet been discovered by any of the old Norse scholars. Even Vigfusson abounds in inconsistencies, and he frequently writes the same name in several ways. In this edition a large number of superfluous consonants have been dropped (*e.g.*, Fin for Finn, Hal for Hall; Trygve for Tryggve, &c.); final "i" has been changed to "e;" one "s" has been substituted for "ss" (*e.g.*, Olafson for Olafsson); sometimes the present form

of the name of a place has been preferred to the old Norse (*e.g.*, Thronthjem, Upsala, Jerusalem, Spain, England; but the editor admits that if he should ever have the privilege of revising the *Heimskringla* again, he would write Trygvason (like Arnason, Skulason, &c.) instead of Trygvesson.

4. The dates of events have been inserted in bracket throughout the text, and a new chronological table has been added at the end of Vol. IV.

5. To the liberality of the publisher the reader is indebted for two maps showing approximately how the world, and particularly the North of Europe, looked to Norse eyes in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

6. Two elaborate indexes have been prepared, one of persons, and peoples, and another of geographical names. In both these indexes the old Norse nominative form of the name has been added, so that the reader may in each case see what liberties the editor has taken in regard to the orthography. In the index of places the modern geographical name is also given whenever it is known. Thus the index of places supplies at a glance any geographical information desired by the reader. For this valuable feature the editor is chiefly indebted to Prof. C. R. Unger's text-edition, which is furnished with similar indexes.

7. Samuel Laing's Preface and Preliminary Dissertation have been retained *in extenso*, partly as a memorial of their author's deep interest in his subject, and partly as a record of the high-water mark of Norse scholarship in England and America in the

early part of this century. The critical reader will find fault with many of Mr. Laing's bold statements, but he surely cannot fail to admire the glowing enthusiasm which attended the first introduction of the Heimskringla among the Anglo-American descendants and kinsmen of the gods and heroes, kings, earls, and simple bondes of the grand old North. The conspectus or list of Icelandic literature incorporated in the Preliminary Dissertation had to be thoroughly revised, but aside from that the emendations in the Preface and Preliminary Dissertation are confined chiefly to dates and orthography.

8. The skaldic verses being reproduced by Mr. Laing and his son in rhyme and metre, the reviser could not mend them. They are not translations, but rather original songs or ballads in modern measures. The most that can be said for them as reproductions of the Heimskringla verses, is that they are written on the same themes and celebrate the same events. They do not even paraphrase the thought of the original Icelandic texts. The present editor, ready to confess his own inability to reproduce these old skaldic songs in suitable English translations or paraphrases, or to better Mr. Laing's poetry, was at first inclined to follow the example of P. A. Munch, and omit the most of the quotations from the skalds altogether. The fact is that these verses rarely contain any additional historical matter. They are simply quoted by Snorre in corroboration of what he states in prose, and the reader will lose nothing if he skips them. It is fair to presume that



if printing had been invented in Snorre Sturlason's time, and these poems consequently accessible in other books, he would not have quoted them, but simply informed his readers in a preface or in a foot-note where they might find them. While the Norwegian translator, P. A. Munch, omits the poems, the Danish translator, Bishop Grundtvig, has paraphrased them into modern ballads, and Mr. Laing has attempted to imitate the latter. Inasmuch as Mr. Laing appears to have devoted much time and labour to these songs (see Vol. I., pp. 251-261) and inasmuch as they are not essential to Snorre's prose narrative, and can be skipped by the reader without any interruption in the thread of the story, the editor finally decided to leave them as a monument to Mr. Laing's indefatigable industry. In one or two cases where the skaldic verses seemed to be of considerable importance, Dr. Gudbrand Vigfusson's paraphrases have been added from "*Corpus Poeticum Boreale*," a magnificent work, in which the poetry of the old Northern tongue from the earliest times to the thirteenth century, is edited, classified, and translated.

In regard to the life of Samuel Laing, I am happy to be able to give the following brief account, based on notes kindly furnished me by his son, Samuel Laing, Esq., and by his daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Baxter.

The author and traveller Samuel Laing was born in Kirkwall, Orkney, October 4, 1780. He received his early education at the Grammar School there; and entered the college in Edinburgh at the age of seven-

teen. It appears that he visited Kiel in his youth, but the year of his journey thither is not given. Nor do we know the date of his entering the British army, where he served in what was then called the staff corps. He was stationed at Hythe in Kent, where a canal was being constructed at the foot of the high ground bordering on Romney Marsh, and intended as a defence against a French invasion. This must have been in 1806 or 1807, and there he became engaged to Miss Agnes Kelly, a daughter of Captain Kelly, of an old Devonshire family. Mr. Laing was on the staff of Sir John Moore, and accompanied him on his expedition to Spain, and returned to England after the battle of Corunna, at which he was present. In 1809 he left the army, married Miss Kelly in March, and settled in Edinburgh, where his brother, who had lately succeeded to a large fortune, found him a situation as manager of large mines at Wanlockhead in the south of Scotland. His daughter, Mrs. Baxter, was born in December 1809, and two years later his son Samuel (the lady and gentleman who have kindly supplied me with notes about their father), and in November 1812 his wife died. A few years later we find Mr. Laing in Leith, and in 1818 he was in Orkney, engaged by a firm in London to establish the herring fishing, a matter in which he was wholly successful. At the close of 1818, his brother, W. Malcolm Laing, died and left him the landed property in Orkney on which he lived with his children and sister-in-law until 1834, when, on the marriage of his daughter, he left Orkney and never returned. The

next years were spent in Norway, and from his travels there and in Sweden we have his books "A Residence in Norway," "A Tour in Sweden," "Notes of a Traveller," &c. In 1837 his daughter became a widow, and from that time he made his home with her. He continued making excursions abroad, gathering materials for his books, and while at home he wrote constantly. At the age of eighty both his body and mind were still in full vigour, but at eighty-three he broke down both intellectually and physically. He died without any illness, of old age, in his daughter's house in Edinburgh, April 23, 1868, and was buried in the Dean Cemetery near that city. Mr. Laing was of an Orkney family, descended on the male side from a lowland Scotch ancestor, and on the female from a pure Norse stock. His older brother, Malcolm Laing, from whom he inherited the estate, was a distinguished man, author of a "History of Scotland," and a friend and correspondent of Fox, Macintosh, and other leading men of the day. Succeeding as a younger brother to a heavily encumbered estate, he was ruined, like most of the old Orkney proprietors, by the failure of kelp in 1830, and lived for the rest of his life on a small income. But with characteristic energy he took to literature and wrote several works, which were much read and admired. His "Notes of a Traveller" became very popular. His last years were devoted mainly to Norse literature, and in 1844 he published his translation of the *Heimskringla*, a work which greatly delighted Thomas Carlyle. While residing in Orkney

he was the first to introduce the herring fishery and agricultural improvements, which saved the population from destitution on the failure of kelp. He was universally beloved and respected; and for many years he was provost of his native town, Kirkwall. Samuel Laing was a man of singular acuteness and geniality.

In conclusion, I desire to render my personal thanks to Mr. Birket Smith, its chief, and to the other officials at the Copenhagen University Library. I am indebted to them for many services and particularly for placing at my command those works which it was necessary to consult in connection with this revision. I also wish to acknowledge once more my great obligations to the scholarly works of Gudbrand Vigfusson, H. O. Hildebrand, P. A. Munch, Gustaf Storm, and Theodore Möbius. It goes without saying that Möbius' "Catalogus" and "Verzeichniss" have supplied the materials for the *Heimskringla* bibliography published below. I also avail myself of this opportunity of offering my hearty thanks to the venerable George Stephens, Johannes Steenstrup, to Ernst Sars, Viktor Rydberg, to the Royal Danish Society of Antiquaries, and to all the Scandinavian scholars and authors who have in so many ways assisted and befriended me during my pleasant sojourn in the North.

For the rare opportunity of spending four years in Copenhagen, where these and other volumes have been prepared under far more favourable auspices

than would elsewhere have been possible, I am particularly indebted to my friend and neighbour the Honourable William F. Vilas, Secretary of the Interior at Washington, who recommended me to the President of the United States for the diplomatic mission to Denmark, and it affords me the greatest pleasure to be permitted to dedicate these Heimskringla volumes to him as a slight token of my gratitude, and as a *souvenir* of his distinguished and disinterested kindness to an ambitious student of Scandinavian antiquities, history and literature.

RASMUS B. ANDERSON.

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK,

February 11, 1889.

## HEIMSKRINGLA BIBLIOGRAPHY.

### A.—MANUSCRIPTS.

THE original manuscript is not known. The oldest one extant is—

1. *Kringla*, so called from the first words *Kringla heimsins*, "the world's circle," whence the whole work has received the well-known name Heimskringla. *Kringla* is supposed to be written about the year 1260; in the sixteenth century it was in Norway; in 1633 it came to Copenhagen, was destroyed by the fire of 1728, but had then been copied several times, and an excellent copy, made by Asgeir Jonsson in 1682, is now preserved in the Arne Magnusson collection. The preface is wanting, but in other respects this manuscript is nearly complete.

2. *Jöfraskinna*, written 1260–1270, was brought to Copenhagen

1665, was destroyed by the fire of 1728, but had previously been transcribed by various persons, and also by Asgeir Jonsson. The beginning is wanting.

3. *Gullinskinn*, probably from 1270-1280; was brought to Copenhagen before 1682; was lost in the fire of 1728, but had been copied by Asgeir Jonsson.

4. *Firspennil*, probably from 1280, is still to be found in the Arne Magnusson collection. It was brought to Copenhagen from Norway, where it had been kept from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century.

5. *Codex Frisianus*, written about the year 1300, came from Norway to Denmark; was owned in the seventeenth century by Otto Friis (hence its name). It is now in the Arne Magnusson collection.

6. Several fragments found in Iceland, and probably dating from the year 1300, are also preserved in the Arne Magnusson collection in Copenhagen.

#### B.—TEXT-EDITIONS.

1. J. Peringsköld's, published in Stockholm, with a translation into Swedish, in the year 1697.

2. A folio edition, in three volumes, published in Copenhagen 1777-1783, with Latin and Danish translations by G. Schöning, S., and B. Thorlacius, and E. C. Werlauff. The Danish translation was made by the Iclander Jon Olafsson.

3. C. R. Unger's, published in Christiania in 1868.

4. N. Linder's and K. A. Haggson's, published in three volumes in Upsala, 1870-1872.

#### C.—TRANSLATIONS.

1. A translation into Norwegian, made 1550 by Laurents Hanssön (never printed).

2. A translation into Danish by Jens Mortensön, published in Copenhagen, 1594.

3. A translation into Norwegian by Peter Claussön, made 1599, published by Ole Worm in Copenhagen, 1633.

4. A translation into Swedish in Peringsköld's edition, published in Stockholm in 1697 (*see above*).

5. A translation into Danish in Schöning's edition, published in Copenhagen in 1777-1783 (*see above*).
6. A translation into Latin in Schöning's edition (*see above*).
7. A translation into Swedish by G. Richert, published in Stockholm, 1816-1829.
8. A translation into Danish by N. F. S. Grundtvig, published in Copenhagen, 1818-1822.
9. A translation into German by F. Wachter, published in Leipzig, 1835-1836.
10. A translation into German by G. Mohnike, published in Stralsund, 1837.
11. A translation into Norwegian by J. Aal, published in Christiania, 1838-1839.
12. A translation into English by Samuel Laing, published in London, 1844.
13. A translation into Norwegian by P. A. Munch, published in Christiania, 1859.
14. A translation into Swedish by H. O. Hildebrand-Hildebrand, published in Orebro, 1869-1871.

#### D.—COMMENTARIES.

1. Müller, P. E., *Undersøgelse om Kilderne, til Snorre's Heimskringla, og disses Troværdighed*, Copenhagen, 1823.
2. Cronholm, Abr., *De Snorronis Sturlonidis Historia*, Lundæ, 1841.
3. Maurer, Konrad, *Ueber Heimskringla und ihre Entstehung*, published in his "Ueber die Ausdrücke: altnordische, altnorwegische, und isländische Sprache," Munich, 1867.
4. Storm, Gust., *Snorre Sturlasson's Historieskrivning, en Kritisk Undersøgelse*, Copenhagen, 1873.
5. Möbius, Th., *Über die Heimskringla in. Zeitschr f. deutsche Philologie V. 141-146*, 1874.

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

IT is of importance to English history to have, in the English language, the means of judging of the social and intellectual state—of the institutions and literature—of a people who during 300 years bore an important, and for a great portion of that time a predominant part, not merely in the wars, but in the legislation of England; who occupied a very large proportion of the country, and were settled in its best lands in such numbers as to be governed by their own, not by Anglo-Saxon laws; and who undoubtedly must be the forefathers of as large a proportion of the present English nation as the Anglo-Saxons themselves, and of a much larger proportion than the Normans. These Northmen have not merely been the forefathers of the people, but of the institutions and character of the nation, to an extent not sufficiently considered by our historians. Civilised or not in comparison with the Anglo-Saxons, the Northmen must have left the influences of their character, institutions, barbarism or culture, among their own posterity. They occupied one-third of all England for many generations, under their own Danish laws; and for half a century nearly, immedi-



ately previous to the Norman conquerors, they held the supreme government of the country. It is doing good service in the fields of literature to place the English reader in a position to judge for himself of the influence which the social arrangements and spirit of these Northmen may have had on the national character, and free institutions which have grown up among us from elements planted by them, or by the Anglo-Saxons. This translation of Snorre Sturlason's Chronicle of the Kings of Norway will place the English reader in this position. He will see what sort of people these Northmen were who conquered and colonised the kingdoms of Northumberland, East Anglia, and other districts, equal to one-third of all England at that time, and who lived under their own laws in that portion of England; and he will see what their institutions and social spirit were at home, whether these bear any analogy to what sprang up in England afterwards, and whether to them or to the Anglo-Saxon race we are most indebted for our national character and free constitution of government. The translator of Snorre Sturlason's Chronicle hopes, too, that his labour will be of good service in the fields of literature, by bringing before the English public a work of great literary merit,—one which the poet, or the reader for amusement, may place in his library, as well as the antiquary and reader of English history.

The translator can lay claim to no considerable knowledge of or great familiarity with the Icelandic. To get at the meaning and spirit of the text in any

way was his main object; and where he met difficulties, which generally lay only in his own ignorance, he spared no labour in collating the passages he was in doubt about with the Swedish translation in Peringskiöld's edition of the work,—with the Danish translation in the edition begun 1777 by Schöning under the auspices of the Danish Government, and finished in 1826 by Thorlacius and Werlauff, in 6 vols. folio,—and with the excellent translation of it into Norse by M. Jacob Aal, published in quarto, in 1838, at Christiania. His notes and explanations are derived mostly from these sources, and principally from M. Jacob Aal's work: and where from his imperfect acquaintance with the Icelandic he found difficulties in the text, especially in the skaldic poetry, which is often very obscure, he had recourse to M. Jacob Aal's translation as the best guide to the meaning and spirit of the original. That gentleman, as the last effort of a long life spent in commercial and literary pursuits, has translated Snorre Sturlason's Chronicle, and the Sagas of the succeeding times down to the end of Hakon Hakonsson's reign in 1263, for the use of the Norwegian peasantry. He remembered in his youth that these histories, although in the old and almost obsolete language of Peter Clausson's translation of 1590,\* were a house-book read at the fireside of almost every peasant in Norway; and at a great

\* Peter Clausson's translation remained unprinted until 1633, when Prof. Ole Worm in Copenhagen had it published, together with a review by himself of that period of the history of Norway which lies between King Hakon Hakonsson and Queen Margrete, and a brief description of Norway by Clausson.

expense he has published a new translation of them into Norse, and has placed the book, at a merely nominal price considering its magnificence, again within reach of his countrymen. In the present translation the object has been to make it, like M. Jacob Aal's, not merely a work for the antiquary, but for the ordinary reader of history,—for the common man.

The translator believes, also, that it opens up a new and rich field of character and incident, in which the reader who seeks amusement only will find much to interest him. The adventures, manners, mode of living, characters, and conversations of these sea-kings are highly dramatic, in Snorre's work at least; and are told with a racy simplicity and truthfulness of language which the translator cannot flatter himself with having attained or preserved. All he can say for his work is, that any translation is better than none; and others may be stimulated by it to enter into the same course of study, who may do more justice to a branch of literature scarcely known among us.

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# THE HEIMSKRINGLA;

OR,

## CHRONICLE OF THE KINGS OF NORWAY.

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### *PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION.*

#### CHAPTER I.

##### OF THE LITERATURE AND INTELLECTUAL CONDITION OF THE NORTHMEN.

SNORRE STURLASON'S *Heimskringla* is a work known to few English readers. *Heimskringla*—the world's circle—being the first prominent word of the manuscript that catches the eye, has been quaintly used by the northern antiquaries to designate the work itself. One may well imagine that the librarian, or the scholar, in the midst of the rolls and masses of parchments of the great public and private libraries of Copenhagen and Stockholm, has found his advantage in this simple way of directing an unlettered assistant to the skin he wishes to unfold. It is likely that the illuminated initial letters of ancient manuscripts, and of the early printed books, may have had their origin in a similar use or convenience in the monastic libraries of the Middle Ages. Snorre



himself is guiltless of this pedantic conceit; for he calls his work the Saga or Story of the Kings of Norway. It is in reality a chronicle, or rather a connected series of memoirs, of kings and other personages, and of the events in which they have been engaged in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, England, and other countries, from those early ages in which mythology and history are undistinguishably blended together, down to the period nearly of Snorre Sturlason's own birth, to 1177. Snorre begins with Odin and the half-fabulous tales of the Yngling dynasty, and, showing more judgment than many of the modern Saga scholars and antiquaries, passes rapidly over these as an unavoidable introduction to authentic historical times and narratives. From the middle of the ninth century, from Halfdan the Black, who reigned from about the year 827 to about 860, down to Magnus Erlingson, who reigned from about 1162 to 1184, he gives a continuous narrative of events and incidents in public and private life, very descriptive and characteristic of the men and manners of those times,—of the deeds of bold and bloody sea-kings,—of their cruises, of their forays, of their adventures, battles, conquests in foreign lands, and of their home fireside lives also: and he gives, every now and then, very graphic delineations of the domestic manners, way of thinking, acting, and living in those ages; very striking traits of a semi-barbarous state of mind, in which rapacity, cruelty, and bloody ferocious doings, are not unfrequently lightened up by a ray of high and generous feeling;

and he gives too, every now and then, very natural touches of character, and scenes of human action, and of the working of the human mind, which are, in truth, highly dramatic. In rapid narrative of the stirring events of the wild Viking life,—of its vicissitudes, adventures, and exploits,—in extraordinary yet not improbable incidents and changes in the career of individuals,—in touches true to nature,—and in the admirable management of his story, in which episodes, apparently the most unconnected with his subject, come in by-and-by, at the right moment, as most essential parts of it,—Snorre Sturlason stands as far above Ville Hardouin, Joinville, or Froissart, as they stand above the monkish chroniclers who preceded them. His true seat in the Valhal of European literature is on the same bench—however great the distance between—on the same bench with Shakspeare, Carlyle, and Scott, as a dramatic historian; for his Harald Harfager, his Olaf Trygvesson, his Olaf the Saint, are in reality great historical dramas, in which these wild energetic personages, their adherents and their opponents, are presented working, acting, and speaking before you.

This high estimate of the literary merit of Snorre Sturlason's work will scarcely pass unquestioned by English readers,—accustomed indeed to hear of the Anglo-Saxon literature, language, and institutions, as of great importance to the historian and antiquary, and as a study necessary for those who wish to become perfectly acquainted with our own, but who

would never discover from the pages of Hume, or of any other of our historical writers, that the northern pagans who, in the ninth and tenth centuries, ravaged the coasts of Europe, sparing neither age, sex, nor condition—respecting neither churches, monasteries, nor their inmates—conquering Normandy, Northumberland (then reckoned, with East-Anglia, equal to one-third of all England)—and, under Svein and Canute the Great, conquering and ruling over the whole of England,—were a people possessing any literature at all, or any laws, institutions, arts, or manners connecting them with civilised life. Our historians have confined themselves for information entirely to the records and chronicles of the Anglo-Saxon monks, who, from their convent walls, saw with horror and dismay the bands of these blood-thirsty pagans roving through the country, ravaging, burning, and murdering; and who naturally represent them as the most ferocious and ignorant of barbarians, and without any tincture of civilisation. Our historians and their readers are apt to forget altogether that, pagan and barbarian as these Danes or Northmen of the ninth and tenth centuries undoubtedly were, they were the same people, only in a different stage of civilisation, as the Anglo-Saxons themselves, and were in the tenth century, in their social state, institutions, laws, religion, and language, what the Anglo-Saxons had been in the fifth century, when they first landed on the Isle of Thanet. They forget, too, that the introduction of Christianity, and with it of the Latin language, and of the learning

which had a reference only to the Church, and the introduction of social arrangements, establishments, and ideas of polity and government, cast in one mould for all countries of Christendom by the Romish Church, had during these five centuries altered, exhausted, and rendered almost effete, the original spirit and character of Anglo-Saxon social institutions. They do not sufficiently consider the powerful moral influence of this fresh infusion, in the tenth century, of the same spirit, from the same original source, upon the character, ideas, and even forms of government and social arrangements of the whole English population in the subsequent generations, and through them upon the whole of modern society. They do not sufficiently appreciate the social effects of the settlements of these Northmen in England immediately previous to the Norman conquest, when for four generations of kings, viz., Svein, Canute, Harald, and Hardicanute, they had been sole masters of the country, and had possessed and held under their own Danish laws, for many previous generations, what was reckoned equal to one-third of all England. The renovation of Anglo-Saxon institutions, the revival of principles and social spirit which were exhausted in the old Anglo-Saxon race, may be traced to this fresh infusion from the cognate northern people. This subject is very curious and important.

Two nations only have left permanent impressions of their laws, civil polity, social arrangements, spirit, and character, on the civilised communities of modern

times—the Romans, and the handful of northern people from the countries beyond the Elbe which had never submitted to the Roman yoke, who, issuing in small piratical bands from the fifth to the tenth century, under the name of Saxons, Danes, Northmen, plundered, conquered, and settled on every European coast from the White Sea to Sicily. Under whatever name, Goths, Visigoths, Franks, Anglo-Saxons, Danes, or Northmen, these tribes appear to have been all of one original stock,—to have been one people in the spirit of their religion, laws, institutions, manners, and languages, only in different stages of civilisation, and the same people whom Tacitus describes. But in Germany the laws and institutions derived from the Roman power, or formed under it after the Roman empire became Christianised, had buried all the original principles of Teutonic arrangements of society as described by Tacitus; and in France the name was almost all that remained of Frank derivation. All the original and peculiar character, spirit, and social institutions of the first inundation of this Germanic population, had become diluted and merged under the church government of Rome,—when a second wave of populations from the same pagan north inundated again, in the ninth and tenth centuries, the shores of Christendom. Wheresoever this people from beyond the pale and influence of the old Roman empire, and of the later church empire of Rome, either settled, mingled, or marauded, they have left permanent traces in society of their laws, institutions, character, and spirit.

Pagan and barbarian as they were, they seem to have carried with them something more natural, something more suitable to the social wants of man, than the laws and institutions formed under the Roman power. What traces have we in Britain of the Romans? A few military roads, and doubtful sites of camps, posts, and towns,—a few traces of public works, and all indicating a despotic military occupation of the country, and none a civilised condition of the mass of the inhabitants,—alone remain in England to tell the world that here the Roman power flourished during four hundred years.

In every province of the ancient Roman empire, even in Italy itself, the remains of Roman power are of the same character—whether those remains be of material objects, as edifices, public works, roads, temples, statues—or of moral objects, as law, government, religion, and social arrangement; and that character is of a hard iron despotism, in which all human rights, all individual existence in wellbeing, all the objects for which man enters into social union with his fellow-man, are disregarded in favour of ruling classes or establishments in the social body, noble, military, or clerical. The Saxon occupation of England lasted for a similar period to the Roman, for about four hundred years. This first wave of the flood of northern populations has left among us traces of laws and institutions, and of a social character and spirit, in which many outlines of freedom and of just principles of social union are distinguishable; and left the influences

on the social body of ideas, manners, language, which still exist. But these traces were nearly obliterated, and it is not to be denied that their influence on society was effete,—that in Anglo-Saxon England, as in the rest of Europe, all social arrangement, character, and spirit were assuming one shape and hue under the pressure of superstition, and of the Roman power, institutions, and ascendancy, revived through the influence of the Church of Rome which had been in full operation for four centuries and a half, assimilating everything to one form and principle,—when the second wave of the northern populations, the Danes or Northmen, came, under Svein and Canute the Great, to invigorate and renew the social elements left by the first. The moral power of this people—the Anglo-Saxons and Northmen being essentially the same people—has left deeper impressions on society, and of a nobler character, than the despotic material power of the Romans. It is in activity at the present hour in European society, introducing into every country more just ideas than those which grew up amidst the ruins of the Roman empire, of the social relations of the governing and the governed. The history of modern civilisation resolves itself, in reality, into the history of the moral influences of these two nations. All would have been Roman in Europe at this day in principle and social arrangement,—Europe would have been, like Russia or Turkey, one vast den of slaves, with a few rows in its amphitheatre of kings, nobles, and churchmen,

raised above the dark mass of humanity beneath them, if three boats from the north of the Elbe had not landed at Ebbsfleet in the Isle of Thanet fourteen hundred years ago, and been followed by a succession of similar boat expeditions of the same people, marauding, conquering, and settling, during six hundred years, viz., from 449 to 1066. All that men hope for of good government and future improvement in their physical and moral condition—all that civilised men enjoy at this day of civil, religious, and political liberty—the British constitution, representative legislature, the trial by jury, security of property, freedom of mind and person, the influence of public opinion over the conduct of public affairs, the Reformation, the liberty of the press, the spirit of the age—all that is or has been of value to man in modern times as a member of society, either in Europe or in the New World, may be traced to the spark left burning upon our shores by these northern barbarians.

Our English writers and readers direct their attention too exclusively to the Anglo-Saxon branch of this great Teutonic race of people, and scarcely acknowledge the social influence of the admixture of their Danish conquerors,—of that fresh infusion in the tenth century, from the same original stock, of the original spirit, character, and social institutions. The schoolman and the political antiquary find it classical or scholarlike to trace up to obscure intimations, in the treatise of Tacitus on the ancient Germans, the origin of parliaments, trial by jury,



and all other free institutions, assuming somewhat gratuitously that the seafaring Saxons, who, four hundred years after the days of Tacitus, crossed the sea from the countries north of the Elbe, and conquered England, were identical in laws and social institutions with the forest Germans on the Rhine whom Tacitus describes; and forgetting that a much nearer and more natural source of all the social elements they are tracing back to the forests of Germany in the time of Agricola, was to be found in full vigour among the people who had conquered and colonised the kingdoms of Northumberland and East Anglia, reckoned equal then to one-third of England, and had held them for several generations, and who conquered and ruled over all England for nearly half a century immediately previous to its final conquest by their own Norman kinsmen. The spirit, character, and national vigour of the old Anglo-Saxon branch of this people, had evidently become extinct under the influence and pressure of the Church of Rome upon the energies of the human mind. This abject state of the mass of the old Christianised Anglo-Saxons is evident from the trifling resistance they made to the small piratical bands of Danes or Northmen who infested and settled on their coasts. It is evident that the people had neither energy to fight, nor property, laws, or institutions to defend, and were merely serfs on the land of nobles, or of the Church, who had nothing to lose by a change of masters. It is to the renewal of the original institutions, social condition, and

spirit of Anglo-Saxon society, by the fresh infusion of these Danish conquerors into a very large proportion of the whole population in the eleventh century—and not to the social state of the forest Germans in the first century—that we must look for the actual origin of our national institutions, character, and principles of society, and for that check of the popular opinion and will upon arbitrary rule which grew up by degrees, showing itself even in the first generation after William the Conqueror, and which slowly but necessarily produced the English constitution, laws, institutions, and character. The same seed was no doubt sown by the old Anglo-Saxons, and by the Northmen—for they were originally the same people; but the seed of the former had perished under Romish superstition and Church influence, during five centuries in which the mind and property in every country were subjugated to the priesthood whose home was at Rome; and the seed of the latter flourished, because it was fresh from a land in which all were proprietors with interests at stake, and accustomed, although in a very rude and violent way, to take a part, by Things, or assemblies of the people, in all the acts of their government.

Some German, Anglo-American, and English writers, with a silly vanity, and a kind of party feeling, claim a pre-eminence of the Anglo-Saxon race among the European people of our times, in the social, moral, political, and religious elements of society, and even in physical powers—in intellect

and in arms. This is the echo of a bray first heard in the forgotten controversy about the authenticity of Ossian's Poems. Pinkerton contended stoutly for the natural intellectual superiority of the Gothic over the Celtic race, insisting that no intellectual achievement, not even the almost physical achievement of the conquest of a country by force of arms, was ever accomplished by Celts. The black hair, dark eye, and dusky skin of the small-sized Celt, were considered by those philosophers to indicate an habitation for souls less gifted than those which usually dwell under the yellow hair, blue eye, and fair skin of the bulky Goth. This conceit has been revived of late in Germany, and in America; and people talk of the superiority of the Gothic, Germanic, or Anglo-Saxon race, as if no such people had ever existed as the Romans, the Spaniards, the French—no such men as Cæsar, Buonaparte, Cicero, Montesquieu, Cervantes, Ariosto, Raphael, Michael Angelo. If the superiority they claim were true, it would be found not to belong at all to that branch of the one great northern race which is called Teutonic, Gothic, Germanic, or Anglo-Saxon—for that branch in England was, previous to the settlements of the Danes or Northmen in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and is at this day throughout all Germany, morally and socially degenerate, and all distinct and distinguishing spirit or nationality in it dead; but to the small cognate branch of the Northmen or Danes, who, between the ninth and twelfth centuries brought their paganism, energy,

and social institutions, to bear against, conquer, mingle with, and invigorate the priest-ridden, inert descendants of the old Anglo-Saxon race. It was not, perhaps, so much an overwhelming number of these Northmen, as the new spirit they brought with them, that mixed with and changed the social elements of the countries they settled in. A spark will set fire to a city, if it find stuff to kindle. This stuff was in human nature; and these Northmen, a handful as they were of mere barbarians, did kindle it with their spark of a free social existence, in which all men had property or interests, and a right to a voice in the affairs of their government and in the enactment of their laws. It must be admitted, whatever we think of the alleged superiority of the Teutonic race over the Celtic or Slavonic, that this Northern branch has been more influential than the older Anglo-Saxon branch of their common race on the state of modern society in Europe. We have only to compare England and the United States of America with Saxony, Prussia, Hanover, or any country calling itself of ancient Germanic or Teutonic descent, to be satisfied that from whatever quarter civil, religious, and political liberty, independence of mind, and freedom in social existence may have come, it was not from the banks of the Rhine, or the forests of Germany.

The social condition, institutions, laws, and literature of this vigorous, influential branch of the race, have been too much overlooked by our historians and political philosophers; and this work of Snorre

Sturlason gives us very different impressions of this branch, in its pagan and barbarous state, from the impressions which the contemporary Anglo-Saxon writers, and all our historians on their authority, afford us. Let us first look at their literature, and compare it with that of the Anglo-Saxon of the same ages.

Our early historians, from the Venerable Bede downwards, however accurate in the events and dates they record, and however valuable for this accuracy, are undeniably the dullest of chroniclers. They were monks, ignorant of the world beyond their convent walls, recording the deaths of their abbots, the legends of their founders, and the miracles of their sainted brethren, as the most important events in history; the facts being stated without exercise of judgment, or inquiry after truth, the fictions with a dull credulity unenlivened by a single gleam of genius. The *Historia Ecclesiastica venerabilis Bedæ*, and Asser's *Life of Alfred*, embrace the earlier portion of the same period, viz., the latter half of the eighth century, of which the first Sagas of the *Heimskringla* of Snorre Sturlason treat. The *Saxon Chronicle* is a dry record of facts and dates, ending about 1155, or about the same period (within twenty years) at which the *Heimskringla* ends. Matthew Paris begins his history about 1057, and carries it down to about 1250, which is supposed to be about the period of his own death. He was a contemporary of Snorre, who was born in 1178, and murdered in Iceland in 1241. Matthew Paris was no unlettered, obscure

monk. He was expressly selected by the Pope, in 1248, for a mission to Norway to settle some disputes among the monks of the order of Saint Benedict, in the monastery of Nidarholm, or Monkholm, in the diocese of Thronthjem ; and after accomplishing the object of his mission he returned to his monastery at St. Albans. It is not to be denied that all this connected series of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman history, from the dissolution of the Roman empire in Britain in the middle of the fifth century down to the middle of the thirteenth century, although composed by such writers of the Anglo-Saxon population as Bede and Matthew Paris, men the most eminent of their times for learning and literary attainments among the Anglo-Saxons and their descendants, is of the most unmitigated dulness, considered as literary or intellectual production ; and that all the historical compositions of the old Anglo-Saxon branch during those eight centuries, either in England or in Germany, are, with few if any exceptions, of the same leaden character. They are also, with the exception of the Saxon Chronicle, and of the translation into Anglo-Saxon of Bede by the great King Alfred, all, or almost all, composed in the Latin tongue, not in the native national tongue of the country in which they were composed and of which they treat ;—composed not for the people, and as part of the literature of the country, but for a tribe of cloistered scholars spread over the country, yet cut off by their profession from all community of interests, feelings, or views, with the rest of the

nation ; a class centralised in Rome, and at home only in her church establishment. It was their literature, not the literature of the nation around them, that these writers composed ; and its influence, and even all knowledge of its existence, was confined to their own class. It was not until the thirteenth century that Ville Hardouin composed his *Memoirs* in the vernacular tongue of his countrymen ; and he and Joinville, who wrote about the end of the thirteenth century, are considered the earliest historical writers who emancipated history from the Latinity and dulness of the monkish chroniclers.

When we turn from the heavy Latin records of the Anglo-Saxon monks to the accounts given of themselves in their own language, during the very same ages, by the Northmen, we are startled to find that these wild, bloody sea-kings, worshippers of Thor, Odin, and Frigg, and known to us only from the Anglo-Saxon monks as ferocious pagans, overthrowing kings, destroying churches and monasteries, ravaging countries with fire and sword, and dragging the wretched inhabitants whom they did not murder into slavery, surpassed the cognate Saxon people they were plundering and subduing, in literature as much as in arms—that poetry, history, laws, social institutions and usages, many of the useful arts, and all the elements of civilisation and freedom, were existing among them in those ages in much greater vigour than among the Anglo-Saxons themselves. We cling to the early impression given us by Hume, and all our best historians, upon the authority of our monkish

chroniclers, that these Pagan Danes or Northmen were barbarians of an almost brutal ignorance and ferocity, without a spark of civilisation or literature. We see that these Vikings, or marauders from the North, were bloody, daring, capable of incredible enterprises and exertion, and of incredible outrages and cruelty when successful—and that a few hundreds of them landing from row-boats, could daunt and subdue extensive tracts of country and all their inhabitants; yet we do not draw the natural conclusion from these facts, that this terrifying, conquering few must have been superior in mental power, energy, and vigour of action, to the daunted, conquered many. All conquests that history tells of will be found to resolve themselves into the superior mental powers of the conquerors. The Romans conquered nations armed in the same way as themselves by superior tactics, discipline, military arrangement, and perseverance; that is, by superior mental power applied to the same material means. The moderns in America, India, and in Europe, conquer by the superiority of firearms, or of what belongs to the efficiency of firearms, in a campaign. This too is the superiority of mental power in the invention, construction, or application of material means. The Northmen, armed with the same weapons as the inhabitants of England, men of the same physical powers as the Anglo-Saxons, land in small piratical bands, altogether insignificant in numbers, on the coasts of England and France, and terrify, paralyse, and conquer, as the Spaniards with their firearms



and horses did in Mexico or Peru. What is this but the superiority of mind, of intellectual power, energy, spirit, over the inert passive Anglo-Saxon inhabitants, tamed down by the Church influence and superstition of five centuries into a state of listless existence, without spirit or feeling as a nation, or confidence and self-dependence as individuals, and looking for aid from saints, prayers, and miracles? It was the human mind in a state of barbarous energy and action, and with the vitality of freedom, conquering the human mind in a state of slavish torpidity and superstitious lethargy. The paucity of numbers of these Danes or Northmen was not compensated by any superiority of the weapons, discipline, or tactics they used; but they were men fighting to acquire property by plunder or conquest, who had laws and institutions which secured to them its enjoyment; and they had as opponents only a population of serfs or labourers, with no property in the soil, no interests to fight for, nothing to lose or to defend but what they could save as well by flying or submitting as by fighting.

It might be surmised by a philosophic reader of the history of those times, that all the vigorous action and energy of mind of these barbarous Danes or Northmen could not be showing itself only in deeds of daring enterprise abroad,—that some of it must be expending itself at home, and in other arts and uses than those of a predatory warfare. It will not, at least, surprise such a reader that some of this mental

power was applied at home in attempts, however rude, at history and poetry ; but he will be surprised to find that those attempts surpass, both in quality and quantity, all that can be produced of Anglo-Saxon literature during the same ages, either in the Anglo-Saxon language or in the Latin. These literary attempts also, or, to give them their due title, this body of literature, is remarkably distinguished from that of the Anglo-Saxons, or of any other people of the same period, by being composed entirely in the native national tongue, and intended to instruct or amuse an audience of the people ; and not in a dead language, and intended merely for the perusal of an educated class in the monasteries. With the exception of Thjodrek the Monk, who wrote in Latin in the time of King Sverre, viz., between 1177 and 1202, a history of the kings of Norway down to the end of the reign of Sigurd the Crusader in 1130, and who appears to have been a foreigner, all the literary attempts among this northern branch of the one great race, during the five centuries in which the other branch, the Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon, was confining all intellectual communication in history or poetry to Latin, and within the walls of the cloisters, were composed in the vernacular tongue of the country, intelligible to, and indeed altogether addressed to, the people of all classes.\* This singular instance in Europe

\* A "*Historia Norvagia*" also seems to have been written in Latin by a Norwegian in the twelfth century. An attempt to make Latin the literary language was also made in Iceland, when the monks Od

of a national literature diffused among a barbarous and rude people, who had not even received the civilisation which accompanies the Christian religion under every form, before the beginning of the twelfth century, who were Pagans in short fully five hundred years after every other part of Europe was, with the exception of some districts perhaps on the coasts of the Baltic, fully Christianised, has not been sufficiently considered by historians in estimating the influence of literature on national mind, character, and social arrangement. To the influence of this rude national literature we probably owe much of what we now pride ourselves upon as the noblest inheritance from our forefathers,—that national energy, activity, independence of mind, and value for civil and political freedom, which distinguish the population of England from that of all other countries, and have done so ever since the admixture of the Northmen with the Old Anglo-Saxons. It may be said that the influence of sagas or songs, of the literature, such as it may be, upon the spirit and character of a people, is overstated, and that it is but a fond exaggeration, at any rate, to dignify with the title of a national, influential literature, the rude traditionary tales and ballads of a barbarous Pagan population. But a nation's literature is its breath of life, without which a nation has no existence, is but a congregation of

Snorreson (died 1200) and Gunlaug Leifson (died 1218) in the Thingeyra cloister produced works on Olaf Trygvesson in the Latin language. The originals are lost, and the works are known only through Icelandic translations and adaptations.

individuals. However low the literature may be in its intellectual merit, it will nationalise the living materials of a population into a mass animated with common feeling. During the five centuries in which the Northmen were riding over the seas, and conquering wheresoever they landed, the literature of the people they overcame was locked up in a dead language, and within the walls of monasteries. But the Northmen had a literature of their own, rude as it was; and the Anglo-Saxon race had none, none at least belonging to the people. The following list will show the reader that in the five centuries between the days of the Venerable Bede and those of Matthew Paris, that is from the ninth to the end of the thirteenth century, the northern branch of the common race was not destitute of intellectuality, notwithstanding all their Paganism and barbarism, and had a literature adapted to their national spirit, and wonderfully extensive. The list is taken from that given by Thormod Torfæus, in his "Series Dynastarum et Regum Daniæ," from that given by Müller in his "Sagabibliothek," and from that of Biorn Haldorson. The notes on the date and contents are extracted chiefly from Müller's work. The words *historical* or *fabulous* indicate only that the work is founded on facts apparently, or is a work of fiction." \*

\* The list has been thoroughly revised by the present Editor, who has consulted in this connection "Catalogus Librorum," and the "Verzeichniss," by the learned Prof. Theodor Möbius of Kiel, and Gudbrand Vigfusson's edition of Cleasby's Icelandic-English Dictionary and his edition of Sturlunga Saga.

- Adonius Saga* (of a king and duke in Syria). Fabulous.
- Alafleks Saga* (of a son of a King Richard of England). Fabulous.
- Alexander Mikla Saga* (of Alexander the Great, translated by Bishop Brand Jonson, by order of Hakon Hakonson). Historical.
- Amicus Saga ok Amilius* (of Amicus and Amilius—belongs to the story of the Seven Wise Men). Fabulous.
- Amloda Saga* (of Hamlet, freely translated from Saxo). Fabulous.
- Andra Rimur* (Rhymes of or concerning Andreas).
- Ans Saga* (of An Buesvinger). Mythologico-Historical.
- Arna Biskups Saga* (of Bishop Arne, flourished 1260). Historical.
- Arons Saga Hiorleifssonar* (of Aron, son of Hiorleif). Historical.
- Asmundar Saga vikings ins Irska*.
- Bærings Saga fagra* (of the beautiful Bæring, a Saxon king). Fabulous.
- Bandamanna Saga* (of the Confederates—account of an Icelandic law-process in the eleventh century). Local history.
- Bardar Saga Snæfellsass* (of Bard, son of King Dumo, a giant). Fabulous.
- Barlaams Saga ok Josaphats*.
- Bevus Saga* (of Bevis, son of an English Count Ginar). Fabulous.
- Biskupa Sögur* (Sagas of the Bishops). Of these two large volumes have been published by the Icelandic Literary Society.
- Bjarnar Saga Hitdælakappa* (of Biorn of Hitdale, a contemporary of King Olaf the Saint). Historical.
- Blomstrvalla Saga* (a translation from the German by Biorn, in Hakon Hakonson's time). The name Blomstrvalla is from a place near Alexandria, where the scene is laid.
- Bodvars Biarka Saga*. Historical.
- Bose ok Herauts Saga* (of Bose and Heraut). Fabulous.
- Bragda-Magus Saga*. Mythical.
- Brandkrossa Thattr* (Traits of Helge Asbiornson and Helge Drop-laugson). Fabulous.
- Breta Sögur* (Saga of Wales, called Bretland; the parts of England occupied by the Anglo-Saxons were called Saxland by the Northmen). This is from Geoffrey of Monmouth's work.
- Broddhelga Saga* (of a chief who died about 974). Historical.
- Bua Saga* (of Bue Andredson). Fabulous.
- Damusta Saga* (of a Damusta who killed Ion, king of a country south of France, and became king of Greece). Fabulous.
- Dinus Saga Dromblata* (of Dionysius the Proud, son of King Ptolemy, in Egypt).
- Draplaugarsona Saga* (of the sons, Helge and Grim, of Draplaug). History and fable mixed; the period, the tenth century.
- Drauma Jons Saga* (of John the Dreamer and Earl Henry). Fabulous.

*Edda Sœmunds* (the elder Edda). Mythological. English translation by Benjamin Thorpe. London, 1866.

*Edda Snorres* (the younger Edda). Mythological. Translated into English by R. B. Anderson. Chicago, 1880.

*Edvardar Saga hins helga* (of Saint Edward of England).

*Egils Saga Einhenda ok Asmundar* (of Egil the One-handed, and Asmund). Fabulous.

*Egils Saga Skallagrimssonar* (of Egil, son of Skallagrim). Historical; period from the middle of the ninth to the end of the tenth century. Translated into English by Daniel Kilham Dodge, Ph.D.

*Eiriks Saga Rauda* (of Eirik Red, who discovered Greenland, and Vinland or America). Historical; period from near the end of the ninth to the beginning of the tenth century.

*Eiriks Saga Vidforla* (of Eirik the Wanderer, who goes in search of the land of immortality). Mythological.

*Elis Saga* (of Elis or Julius and Rosamund). Translated from the French, 1226, by Monk Robert, by order of Hakon Hakonson.

*Eyrbyggja Saga* (of Thorgrim, whose forefather, Rolf, came from the Isle of Moster in the west of Norway, and first planted Iceland with people from his island (*eyrbyggja*, isle-settlers) to escape Harald Harfager). Historical; period from the first colonising of Iceland to the middle of the eleventh century.

*Færeyinga Saga* (of the Fareys). Historical.

*Fertrams Saga ok Plato* (of Fertram and Plato, sons of King Arthur). Fabulous.

*Finnboga Saga hins ramma* (of Finboge the Strong). Fable and history, from middle of tenth to eleventh century.

*Flateyar-bók* (the Flatey Codex, so called from the Isle of Flatey in Breidafjörður in Iceland, in which the manuscript was discovered in 1650. The annals end in 1395. It contains many sagas transcribed into it, and is considered a most important historical collection).

*Floamanna Saga* (of a Thorgil and his ancestors, original settlers in Iceland, and of his adventures in Greenland. Thorgil died 1033). Historical.

*Flores Saga ok Blankifstur*.

*Floents Saga* (of Flovent King of the Franks, invented by Master Simon in Lyons).

*Fostbrœdra Saga*. Historical.

*Fridthiofs Saga* (of Fridthiof the Bold). This beautiful story has been the groundwork of several poetic and dramatic imitations, of which Bishop Tegner's, in Swedish, has been translated into English. \*

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\* See Anderson's "Viking Tales of the North," which contains Tegner's poem in English, and a translation of the original sagas.

*Gautreks Saga*. Mythical.

*Gibbons Saga* (of Gibbon, son of the French King William).

*Gisla Saga Surssonar* (of Gisle, the son of Sur. Events of the tenth century in Iceland). Historical. Translated into English by G. W. Dasent. Edinburgh, 1866.

*Gongu-Hrolfs Saga* (of Rolf Ganger, the conqueror of Normandy). Historical.

*Grœnlendinga Thattr* (events in Greenland from 1122, and a list of nine bishops and fifteen churches). Historical.

*Gragas* (Gray Goose). A collection of the laws of Iceland. Edited and translated into Danish by V. Finsen.

*Grettis Saga* (of Grettir the Strong). Adventures, fabulous and historical, mixed, of Grettir and his forefathers, in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries. Translated into English by Magnusson and Morris. London, 1869.

*Grims Saga lodinkinna* (the Saga of Grim Shaggy-chin).

*Gudmundar Biskups Saga* (of Bishop Gudmund); being part of the third book of the Sturlunga Saga, or account of the Sturlung family, which ends 1264, and of which the first books are supposed to have been written 1201.

*Guimars Saga* (of Guimar, an English knight).

*Gullthoris Saga* (of Gold Thorer, or Torskinding Saga). Fabulous.

*Gunlaugs Saga Ormstungu* (of Gunlaug the Serpent-tongued). Historical; the period about 1006. Translated by Eiríkr Magnusson and William Morris, in "Three Northern Love Stories." London, 1875.

*Gunnars Saga keldugnupsfylls* (of Gunnar the Idiot). Fabulous.

*Gunnars Saga Thidrandabana* (of Gunnar who killed Thidrande). Historical; supposed to be written about the end of the twelfth century.

*Hænsa Thoris Saga* (of Thorer the hen-merchant). Historical.

*Hakonar Konungs Saga Hakonarsonar* (of King Hakon Hakonson, who was born 1203, and died 1264). Historical; by Sturle Thordson, a contemporary.

*Hakonar Saga Ivarssonar* (of Hakon Ivarson). Historical.

*Halfdanar Saga Bronufostra* (of Halfdan, foster-son of Bran). Fabulous.

*Halfdanar Saga Eysteinsonar* (of Halfdan, son of Eystein). Fabulous.

*Halfs Saga* (of Half, who, if not altogether a fabulous personage, lived about the eighth century; or in the sixth, according to others).

*Hallfredar Saga Vandrædaskalde* (of Halfred "the skald, desperate or difficult to deal with," who lived in King Olaf the Saint's time). Historical.

*Haralds Rimur Hringsbana* (of Harald, who slew Hring).

*Haralds Rimur Kvingiarna* (Rhymes of or concerning Harald the Woman-lover.)

*Havardar Saga Isfirdings* (a tragic tale). Historical.

*Hemings Thattr* (of Heming, a fabulous personage of Olaf the Saint's time).

*Hervarar Saga* (of Hervar). Mythological.

*Hialmters ok Olvis Saga* (of Hialmther and Olver). Fabulous.

*Hogne ok Hedins Saga*. Mythological.

*Holmverja Saga*. Mixed fable and historical fact regarding Iceland.

*Hrafnkels Saga Freysgoda*. Historical; of Harald Harfager's times.

*Hrafnis Saga Sveinbiarnarsonar* (of Hrafn, son of Sveinbiorn).

*Heidarviga Saga*.

*Hrimis ok Tryggva Rimur*.

*Heimskringla* (the work by Snorre Sturlason now published). Historical.

*Hrolfs Saga Kraka* (a collection of Sagas, some historical, some fabulous).

*Hrolfs Saga Gautrekssonar* (of Hrolf, son of Gautrek). Mythological.  
The story of the battle on the heath. Historical.

*Hrolfs Saga Skuggafjfts* (of Hrolf, son of Skugge the Idiot).

*Hrolfs Saga Kraka ok kappu hans* (the Saga of Hrolf Kraka and his heroes).

*Hromundar Saga Greipssonar*. Fabulous.

*Hungrvaka* (the Hunger-waking is the name of a saga of the Bishops of Skalholt down to 1178; the author supposing it would raise an appetite for more).

*Illuga Saga Gridarfostra* (of Illugo, foster-son of Grid). Fabulous.

*Isfirdinga Saga* (of a division of Iceland called Isfirding). Historical.

*Islendingabok Ara Froda* (Book of Iceland—concerning the first colonisation of Iceland, the introduction of Christianity, &c., usually called Are Frode Schedæ; written about 1120). Historical.

*Ivents Saga Artaskappa*. Fabulous; translated from the French by order of Hakon Hakonson.

*Jarlmanns Saga ok Hermanns* (of Jarlman and Herman). Fabulous.

*Jarnsida* (the law of Iceland from A.D. 1272-1280).

*Jokuls Thattr Buasonar* (of Jokul, son of Bue). Fabulous.

*Jomsvikinga Saga* (of the Vikings of Jomsburg, in the island of Wollin or Jom). Historical.

*Jonales Rimur* (Rhymes of Jonales).

*Jons Biskups Saga* (of John the Bishop, viz., Jon Ogmundson, who died 1121, Bishop of Skalholt). Historical.

*Jons Saga Leikveins* (of John the Juggler). Fabulous.

*Jons Saga Baptista* (of John the Baptist).



*Jonsbok* (the Icelandic code of laws of A.D. 1280, and still in use in Iceland.

*Kallinius Rimur* (Rhymes of Callinius).

*Karlamagnus Saga* (of Charlemagne).

*Ketils Saga Hængs* (of Ketil Hæng). Fable and history.

*Kirialax Saga* (of the Emperor Alexis, viz., Kurios Alexis ; but this is a fabulous emperor).

*Klarus Saga Keysarasonar* (of Clarus, son of the Emperor). Fabulous.

*Knytlinga Saga* (of the Danish kings of the Canute dynasty, from Harald Gormson to Canute VII., supposed to be by Olaf Thordson, who died 1259). Historical.

*Konrads Saga Keysarasonar* (of Konrad, son of the Emperor).

*Konungs-skuggsjá* (the King's Mirror). A didactic scholastic work.

*Kormaks Saga* (of Kormak the Skald). Fable and history.

*Kraks Spa* (Prophecy of Krak).

*Kristinrettr* (Ecclesiastic Laws, of which there are several collections).

*Kristni Saga* (of the introduction of Christianity into Iceland, from 981 to 1000). Historical.

*Kroka Refs Saga* (of Ref the Cunning). Fabulous.

*Landnamabok* (events in Iceland from the original settlement in the ninth to the end of the tenth century ; with names of the first settlers, and of their lands, to the number of about 3000 names of persons, and 1400 of places ; supposed to have been written in the last half of the thirteenth century). Historical.

*Langfedgatal* (series of dynasties and kings in the North). Historical.

*Laurentius Biskups Saga* (of Bishop Laurence, who was born 1267). Historical, by a contemporary.

*Laxdæla Saga* (of the descendants of Aud, who settled in Laxdale). Historical.

*Liosvetninga Saga* (Lives of the Descendants of Thorgeir and Gudmund, and their own Lives, between the middle of the tenth and end of the twelfth century). Historical ; written about the end of the twelfth century.

*Magnus Saga Orkneya Jarls* (of Saint Magnus, Earl of Orkney, who was killed 1110). Historical.

*Margretar Saga* (of Margaret and Sigurd, in Magnus the Good's time).

*Mariu Saga* (of Mary, viz., the Virgin).

*Mirmans Saga* (of Mirman, a king in Sicily). Fabulous.

*Mottuls Saga* (of the magic cloak at the court of King Arthur).

*Nikolaus Saga Erkebiskups* (of Nicholas, Archbishop of Lucca).

*Njals Saga* (of Nial). Historical ; and supposed to be written by

Sæmund Frode, in the eleventh century. The Saga of Burnt Njal is translated into English by G. W. Dasent. The title is "The Story of Burnt Njal; or, Life in Iceland."

*Nornagests Thattr.* A mythical story.

*Elkofra-thattr.* A comical tale telling how Thorkel, nicknamed Ale-hood, brewed the beer at the althing. Historical.

*Erverodds Saga* (of Od the Archer; literally, Arrow-Od). Fabulous.

*Orkneyinga Saga* (Saga of the Orkney Isles). Translated into English by Jon Hjalalin and Gilbert Goudie, and edited, with notes and introduction, by Joseph Anderson. Edinburgh, 1873.

*Pals Byskups Saga* (of Bishop Paul, the seventh bishop of Skalholt, who died in 1211; probably by a contemporary). Historical.

*Parcevals Saga* (of Parceval, one of King Arthur's worthies). Fabulous.

*Partalopa Saga.*

*Petr's Saga Postola* (of Peter the Apostle).

*Ragnars Saga Lodbrokar* (of Ragnar Lodbrok). History with fable.

*Reinalds Rimur* Rhymes of (Reinald and Rosa).

*Reykdaela Saga.* A story of the feud between the good chief Axel and the evil Vemund Koger. Historical.

*Salusar Saga ok Nikanors* (of Saul and Nicanor, two foster brothers, one of Galatia, and one of Italy). Fabulous.

*Samsons Saga Fagra* (of Samson the Fair). Fabulous.

*Sigurdar Saga snarfara.*

*Sigurdr Saga Thegla* (of Sigurd the Silent, son of King Lodver in Saxland). Fabulous.

*Skaldhelga Rimur* (Rhymes of the Skald Helge).

*Skida Rimur* (Rhyme of Skide).

*Stjornu Odda Draumr* (Star Odde, viz., the Astrologer Odde's Dream).

*Stufs Thattr* (Traits of Stuf the Skald, who lived in the time of Harald Sigurdson, about 1050). Historical.

*Sturlunga Saga* (of the family of Sturla, of which Snorre Sturlason was a descendant, from the beginning of the twelfth century to 1284). Historical. Edited, with Prolegomena, Appendices, Tables, Indices, and Maps, by Dr. G. Vigfusson. Oxford, 1878. A superb edition.

*Svarfdæla Saga* (of Thorstein, who first settled in Svarfdal in Iceland; and fabulous adventures of his successors). History and fable.

*Sveins Thattr ok Finns.*

*Sverris Saga* (of King Sverre, from 1177, when Snorre Sturlason's *Heimskringla* ends, to King Sverre's death). Historical.

*Svinfellinga Saga* (the story of the sons of Orm, the noted chief of the Svinfell family). Biographical.

*Thidreks Saga* (of Dietrik of Bern). The same as the German story.

*Thomas Saga Erkebyskups* (of Archbishop Thomas of Canterbury). Edited, with English translation, by Eiríkr Magnússon. London, 1875.

*Thordar Saga Hreðu* (of Thord the Terrible, who, in 975, left Norway, and settled in Iceland). Historical.

*Thorleifs Thattr Jarlaskalds* (of Thorleif the Skald of the Earls of Orkney). Historical.

*Thormodar Saga Kolbrunarskalds* (of Thormod Kolbrunarskald). Historical.

*Thorsteins Saga Sidu-Hallssonar* (of Thorstein, son of Hal o' Side). Historical.

*Thorsteins Saga Vikingssonar* (of Thorstein, son of Viking). Fabulous. Translated into English by R. B. Anderson in his "Viking Tales of the North." Chicago, 1877.

*Thorvalds Saga Vidforla* (tells how Thorvald Kodranson, the far-travelled fellow missionary and companion of the Saxon Bishop-Frederick, preached the new faith to the Icelanders for four years, but in vain). Historical.

*Ulfhams Rimur* (Rhymes of Ulfham).

*Valdimars Saga Konungs* (of Valdemar, son of King Philip of Saxland).

*Vallalíots Saga* (of Ljot o' Vall, an Icelander; the story of the twelfth century). Historical.

*Valvers Thattr* (Traits of the life of Valver).

*Vapnfirdinga Saga* (tells of the feuds between the men of Hof and the men of Crosswick). Historical.

*Vatnsdæla Saga* (of Ketil Thrumr, his son Thorstein, Ingemund and Sæmund, his grandsons, who settled in Vatnsdal in Iceland). Historical.

*Vígaglúms Saga* (of Glum, son of Eyjolf, who went to settle in Iceland 922). Historical. Translated, with notes and an introduction, by Edmund Head. London, 1866.

*Viktors Saga ok Blaus* (of Victor and Blaus). Fabulous.

*Vilhjalms Sago Síods* (of William of the Treasure, a son of King Richard in England). Fabulous.

*Vilkina Saga* (History of the Vilkins). Mythological, and belonging to the Niblung literature.

*Vilmundar Saga* (of Vilmund and Hierande, a son of a king in Frankland). Fabulous.

*Volsunga Saga*. Mythological. Translated into English by E. Magnússon and W. Morris. London, 1870.

The lives of Saints (*Heilagra Manna Sögur*), many of which are mentioned in the above list, constitute two large volumes, published by C. R. Unger in Christiania. The *Postula Sögur*, legendary accounts of the lives of the Apostles, have appeared in a large volume, edited by Prof. C. R. Unger. A large number of the *Riddara Sögur*, that is, Romantic Sagas, have been published by Dr. Engen Kölbing, Strasburg, and by Dr. E. Cederschiöld, of Lund, Sweden. The old Icelandic literature also abounds in so-called *Rimur*, or Ballads, founded on written stories. Many of these *rimurs* have not yet been published. The most of the mythical sagas are published, collected in three volumes, by Prof. C. C. Rafn, Copenhagen.

It does not appear that any saga-manuscript \* now existing has been written before the fourteenth century, however old the saga itself may be. The Flatey manuscript is of 1395. Those supposed to have been written in the thirteenth century are not ascertained to be so on better data than the appearance and handwriting. It is known that in the twelfth century Are Frode, Sæmund, and others began to take the sagas out of the traditionary state, and fix them in writing; but none of the original skins appear to have come down to our times, but only some of the numerous copies of them. Bishop Müller shows good reasons for supposing that before Are Frode's time, and in the eleventh

\* *Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna*, *Hrokkinskinna*—fair skin, dark skin, wrinkled skin—are names applied by Torfæus to manuscripts on parchment, probably to designate, when he resided at Stavanger in Norway, to his friend and correspondent, Arne Magnussen at Copenhagen, the particular skin he wanted to refer to, in a compendious way understood between themselves. Arne Magnussen, whose collection of manuscripts is so often quoted under the name of the *Arnæ-Magnæi*, was the greatest antiquary who *never wrote*. Although he wrote no books, his judgment and opinions are known from notes, selections, and correspondence, and are of great authority at this day in the Saga literature. Torfæus consulted him in his researches, which gives great weight to the views of Torfæus on many points, as we have in them the combined judgment of two of the greatest northern antiquaries.—L.

century, sagas were committed to writing; but if we consider the scarcity of the material in that age—parchment of the classics, even in Italy, being often deleted, to be used by the monks for their writings—these must have been very few. No well-authenticated saga of ancient date in Runic is extant, if such ever existed; although Runic letters occur in Gothic, and even in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, mixed with the other characters.

To these Torfæus adds,—Historical Fragments concerning Ivar Vidfadme, Hrærek Slongvanbauge, Helge Hvasse (the Sharp), and the Battle of Bravalla: also the Codex Flateyensis, as above noticed,—a manuscript so called from the island Flatey, on the west side of Iceland, in which it was discovered, containing the genealogies and annals of the Norwegian kings and chiefs: also a manuscript called by him the Fair Skin—Fagrskinna; being a breviary of the history of Norway, or chronological compendium from Halfdan the Black to Sverre's reign; and also several ancient annals, which, being without titles, he cannot cite in his catalogue. Besides these, the following works, no longer extant in any known manuscripts, are referred to in the ancient histories, viz.: The history of Einar the son of Gisle, who killed Giafald, one of the court of King Magnus Barefoot, is cited in the end of the "Life of Saint Jon Bishop of Holar." The history of Sigurd Hjort (Cervus) is cited by Snorre Sturlason in his "Life of Halfdan the Black." The life of Alfgeir is cited in the "Hardar Saga Grimkelssonar."

The history of Grim the son of the widow on the gard Krop, who killed Eid the son of Skegge of Midfiord, is mentioned in the "Life of Grette the Strong." The life of Thorgils the son of Hall, and the history of the people of Niardvik, are cited in the "History of the Laxdale People." The "Land-nama" mentions histories of Bodmod, of Gerper, of Grimolf, and the life of Thord Geller. The same work mentions also the history of the Thorskiord people, and a life of Vebiorn, who was one of the original settlers in Iceland when it was uninhabited. The history of the Sturlung family shows that formerly there were extant a history of the Berserk and Viking Hraungrid, and lives of Olaf king of the Lidmen or army, of Hrok the Black, and of Orm the Poet. Snorre appears to have read a history of the Skioldung family, that is, of the progenitors of the Danish dynasty. The "Life of Hrolf Krake" cites a life of Thorer the Dog-footed, and a life of Agnar son of Hroar king of Denmark. The "Life of Rolf the Walker,\* the Conqueror of Normandy," cites a history of the Gautland people. The history of Skiold the son of Dag, and of Herman, is cited in the "Life of Illuge Grid's Foster-son." The "Life of Bose" mentions a life of Sigurd Hring. Mention of the histories of Ulf, son of Sebbe, and of Earl Kvik, is made in the historical relation of

\* Hrolf Gangr appears to have been a name in the family; and one of the forefathers of the conqueror of Normandy bore it. The popular tale of his being so stout or corpulent that no horse could carry him, and he was obliged to walk, may therefore be doubted; as such a habit of body would scarcely be consistent with the personal activity of great warriors in those days.—L.

some incidents by the skalds of Harald Harfager. The "History of the Liosvatn People" cites a history of the people of Espihol. The writings of Are, who lived about the year 1117, and first committed to writing the Icelandic compositions, and of Sæmund, who flourished about the year 1083, and had studied at universities in Germany and France, and of Od the Monk, who flourished in the twelfth century, are almost entirely lost. Kolskeg, a contemporary of Are, and, like him, distinguished by the surname of Frode—the wise, or the much knowing—Brand, who lived about the year 1163, Eirik, the son of Od, and his contemporary Karl, abbot of the monastery of Thringey, in the north of Iceland, and several others, appear to have been collectors, transcribers, and partly continuators of preceding chronicles; and all these flourished between the time of Bede in the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth century, when the devastations of these piratical Vikings were at the worst, and the time of Snorre Sturlason in the middle of the thirteenth century, when the Viking life was given up, invasions of Northmen even under their kings had ceased, and the influence of Christianity and its establishments was diffused.

Now we have here a vast body of literature, chiefly historical, or intended to be so, and all in the vernacular tongue of the Northmen. It is for our Anglo-Saxon scholars and antiquaries to say, whether in the Anglo-Saxon tongue, or in the Anglo-Saxon and the Latin together, such a body of national

literature was produced,—whether such intellectual activity existed between the days of the Venerable Bede, our earliest historian, in the beginning of the eighth century, and the days of Matthew Paris, the contemporary of Snorre Sturlason, in the first half of the thirteenth? And these were Pagans, these Northmen, whether in Denmark, Norway, or Iceland, for more than half of these five centuries! This body of literature may surely be called a national literature; for on looking over the subjects it treats of, it will be found to consist almost entirely of historical events, or of the achievements of individuals, which, whether real or fabulous, were calculated to sustain a national spirit among the people for whom they were composed; and scarcely any of it consists of the legends of saints, of homilies, or theological treatises, which constitute the greater proportion of the literature of other countries during the same ages, and which were evidently composed only for the public of the cloisters. It is distinguished also from any contemporary literature, and indeed from any known body of literature, by the peculiar circumstance of its having been for many centuries, and until the beginning of the twelfth century, or within 120 years of Snorre Sturlason's own times, an oral not a written literature, and composed and transmitted from generation to generation by word of mouth, and by memory, not by pen, ink, and parchment. This circumstance may affect the historical value of these documents, if the authenticity of what they relate be not supported by



internal or collateral evidence, but does not affect their literary value as the compositions, during five centuries, of the Northmen, and as such to be compared with the compositions, during the same five centuries, of the cognate Anglo-Saxon people. It is of great importance, however, to examine the value, as historical documents, of these compositions.

The early history of every people can only have been preserved by traditionary stories, songs, ballads, until the age when they were fixed by writing. The early history of Rome, for many centuries, has had no other foundation than such a saga-literature as this of the Northmen. Homer, whether the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* be the works of one mind or of several, has had traditionary accounts as the historical foundation and authority for the events and personages he celebrates. Snorre Sturlason has done for the history of the Northmen what Livy did for the history of the Romans. The traditionary works of the predecessors of Livy in his historical field, the sagas of the Romans, have unfortunately not reached us. The ancient Roman writers themselves regret that the songs and legends, the sagas from which the historical accounts of their ancestors are derived, and which it appears from two passages in Cicero \*

\* Gravissimus auctor in 'Originibus' dixit Cato, morem apud majores hunc epularum fuisse, ut deinceps, qui accubarent, canerent ad tibiam clarorum virorum laudes atque virtutes.—*Cicero, Tusc. Quæst.* iv. 3.

Utinam exstarent illa carmina quæ multis sæculis ante suam ætatem in epulis esse cantitata a singulis convivis de clarorum virorum laudibus in 'Originibus' scriptum reliquit Cato.—*Cicer. Brutus*, cap. xix.

See on this subject the Preface to "Lays of Ancient Rome." By Thomas Babington Macaulay. London: Longman and Co., 1842.—L.

were extant in the time of the elder Cato, and, like the sagas of the Northmen, were sung or recited at feasts, had fallen into oblivion. Such documents in verse or prose are common to the early history of every people, and on such and on the similar transmission of them by memory, the historical Scriptures of the Old Testament themselves rest. These sagas have been preserved among the Northmen, or at least have not perished so entirely but that the sources from which their historian Snorre drew his information may be examined. They constitute the body of literature of which the list of sagas given above is an imperfect catalogue—imperfect because many sagas, songs, or other compositions referred to in those which are extant no longer exist, and probably never had been taken out of the traditionary state, in which they existed then as matter of memory, and been fixed in writing. If we consider the scarcity of the material—parchment—in the Middle Ages, even in the oldest Christianised countries of Europe, and the still greater scarcity of scribes, and men of learning and leisure, who would bestow their time and material on any subjects but monastic legends in the Latin language, we must wonder that so many of these historical tales had been committed to writing in Iceland; not that so many which once were extant in the traditionary state have not been preserved.

Every intelligent reader of English history who is startled at this view of the comparative literature and intellectual condition of the two branches, the

Pagan and the Christian, of the one great northern race, between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries, will desire information on the following points:— Who were the scribes, collectors, or compilers, who preceded Snorre Sturlason in writing down, gathering, or reducing to history, those traditionary narratives called sagas which had floated down on the memory, in verse or in prose, from generation to generation? Who were the original authors of these compositions; and what was the condition of the class of men, the skalds, who composed them? What were the peculiar circumstances in the social condition of the Northmen in those ages, by which such a class as the skalds was kept in bread, and in constant employment and exertion among them, and even with great social consideration; while among the Anglo-Saxons, a cognate branch of the same people, the equivalent class of the Bards, Troubadours, Minstrels, Minnesingers, was either extinct, or of no more social influence than that of the Court Jesters or the Jougleurs?

Snorre Sturlason tells us, in the preface to his work, that “the priest Are *hinn Frodi* (*hinn Frodi* is applied to several writers, and means the Wise, the Learned; le Prud’homme perhaps of the Norman-French, although antiquaries render it into the more assuming Latin appellation, Polyhistor), was the first man in Iceland who wrote down in the Norse tongue both old and new narratives of events.” The *Landnama-bok* (*Liber Originum Islandiæ*), which treats of the first occupation of Iceland by the Norwegians,

and of their descendants; the *Islendinga-bok*, or Book of Iceland, usually quoted by the title of the Latin translation, "*Schedæ Arii Polyhistoris*," which is an account of the introduction of Christianity, and of other affairs in Iceland, and of the judges and other considerable personages; and the *Flateyjar-bok*, forming part of the important manuscript on parchment quoted so often by northern antiquaries by the name of the *Codex Flateyensis*,—are works of Are still extant. The *Flateyjar-bok* appears to have been a chronicle begun by Are, and continued by his successors in his parochial charge. It does not appear that any writing of Are upon parchment is extant, and his labours as a compiler appear to be known from the testimony only of Snorre Sturlason, or from copies such as those in the *Codex Flateyensis*, made from his writings. Are Frode is reckoned by Torfæus to have been born about the year 1067, and to have written "the old and new narratives of events," which Snorre tells us he did, "two hundred and forty years after the first occupation of Iceland by the Norwegians;" about the year 1117. A manuscript of Biorn of Skardsa, which Torfæus says was once in his possession, speaks of an older compiler than Are. Isleif, the first bishop of Iceland, who was consecrated by Adalbert, archbishop of Bremen, in 1056, and who died in 1080, is stated to have written a life of Harald Harfager and his successors, down to Magnus the Good, who died about 1047, compiled from the current sagas; and his son, Bishop Gissur, is stated to have also col-

lected and written down histories in the common tongue. Are the Learned was brought up as a foster-son in the house of Teit, another son of this Bishop Isleif, and, Torfæus supposes, may have used the materials collected by Isleif; and thus the labours of the two, as compilers or scribes of the ancient sagas, may have been attributed to the one of most celebrity. The celibacy of the clergy appears not to have been regarded in the northern countries in the eleventh or twelfth centuries. We read of the wives and sons of priests down to a late period; and Bishop Isleif was not singular in having sons.

Sæmund, also designated as the Learned (*Frodi*), was a contemporary of Are. He was born in 1056, and after travelling and studying in Germany and France returned to Iceland, and settled as priest of the parish of Odde, in the south of Iceland, and commenced the Annals, which were continued by his successors in the clerical charge of Odde, and are hence called “*Annales Oddenses*” by the northern antiquaries. The older Edda, of which the Edda of Snorre Sturlason is but an epitome for explaining the mythological language and allusions of the poetical saga, is attributed to him; but unfortunately it is almost entirely lost, so that we know little of the doctrines or establishments of the ancient Odin-worship. Od the Monk, who lived in the following century, refers to an historical work of Sæmund, which is also lost. Sæmund died in 1133. His contemporary Are survived him, and died in 1148.

Kolskeg, also styled Frode, was another contem-

porary of Are, whose name is known as a compiler, or scribe, but his works are not extant.

Brand, bishop of the diocese of Holar in Iceland, and who died 1264, was also a diligent transcriber of sagas from the memory to parchment. He was a contemporary of Saxo Grammaticus, the Danish historian. Saxo himself, in the preface to his work, gives the strongest testimony to the diligence and importance of the historical researches and traditional records of the Icelanders. "Nor is the industry of the Tylenses (by which name Saxo designates the people of Tyle, Thule, or Iceland) to be passed over in silence, who, from the sterility of their native soil, being deprived of every luxury of food, exercise a perpetual sobriety, and turn every moment of their lives to the cultivation of a knowledge of the affairs of other countries, and, compensating their poverty by their ingenuity, consider it their pleasure to become acquainted with the transactions of other nations, and hold it to be not less honourable to record the virtues of others than to exhibit their own; and whose treasures in the records of historical transactions I have carefully consulted, and have composed no small portion of the present work according to their relations, not despising as authorities those whom I know to be so deeply imbued with a knowledge of antiquity." Saxo appears to have had access to many sagas, either in manuscript, or in *viva voce* relation, which are not now extant. Thjodrek the Monk, a contemporary also of Saxo, who flourished about the year 1161, and wrote a

history of the kings of Norway in Latin, and almost the only historical work of the Middle Ages composed in that language in Norway, gives a similar testimony to the great amount of historical knowledge among the Icelanders transmitted through their songs and sagas. The causes of this peculiar turn among the Icelanders will be inquired into afterwards.

Erik, the son of Od, wrote a history of King Harald Gille's sons, Sigurd and Inge, who succeeded him, as joint kings of Norway, about 1136, to the death of each of them; and gives also the history of King Magnus the Blind, and of Sigurd Slembedegn. As King Inge fell in battle in the year 1161, the work of Erik is to be placed after that date. Karl Jonsson, abbot of the monastery of Thingeyre in the north of Iceland, who was ordained in 1169, and died in 1212, wrote a life of his contemporary King Sverre, who reigned from 1177 to 1202. His work is highly esteemed.

Od the Monk, also called Frode, was next to, or perhaps contemporary with, these writers, and composed a life of King Olaf Trygvesson, containing circumstances not found in other accounts of that reign; from which it is supposed that he had access to sagas not now extant.

These are the principal historical writers who compiled or composed from the ancient unwritten sagas, between the days of Are the Learned in 1117, and the days of Snorre Sturlason in the beginning of the following century. In these hundred or hundred and twenty years between Are and Snorre, the great

mass of literature in the vernacular tongue committed to parchment proves a state of great intellectual activity among these Northmen. It is not the literary or historical value, or the true dates or facts of these traditionary pieces called sagas, written down for the first time within those hundred and twenty years, that is the important consideration to the philosophical reader of history; but the extraordinary fact, that before the Norman conquest of England here was a people but just Christianised, whose fathers were Pagans, and who were still called barbarians by the Anglo-Saxons, yet with a literature in their own language diffused through the whole social body, and living in the common tongue and mind of the people. The reader would almost ask if the Anglo-Saxons were not the barbarians of the two,—a people, to judge from their history, without national feeling, interests, or spirit, sunk in abject superstition, and with no literature among them but what belonged to a class of men bred in the cloister, using only the Latin language, and communicating only with each other, or with Rome. In the same period in which the intellectual powers of the Pagan or newly Christianised Northmen were at work in the national tongue upon subjects of popular interest, what was the amount of literary production among the Anglo-Saxons? Gildas, the earliest British writer, was of the ancient British, not of the Anglo-Saxon people, and wrote about the year 560, or a century after the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in England. Gildas Albanus, or Saint Gildas, pre-



ceded him by about a century; and both wrote in Latin, not in the British or the Saxon tongue. The "*Historia Ecclesiastica Venerabilis Bedæ*" was written in Latin about the year 731; and King Alfred translated this work of the Venerable Bede into Anglo-Saxon about 858, or by other account some time between 872 and 900. Asser wrote "*De Vita et Rebus Gestis Alfredi*" about the same period, for he died 910. Nennius, and his annotator Samuel, are placed by Pinkerton about the year 858. Florence of Worcester wrote about 1100; Simeon of Durham about 1164; Giraldus Cambrensis in the same century. The "*Saxon Chronicle*" appears to have been the work of different hands from the eleventh to the twelfth century. Roger of Hovedon wrote about 1210; Matthew Paris, the contemporary of Snorre Sturlason, about 1240. These are the principal writers among the Anglo-Saxons referred to by our historians, down to the age of Snorre Sturlason; and they all wrote in Latin, not in the language of the people—the Anglo-Saxon.

This separation of the mind and language, and of the intellectual influence of the upper educated classes, from the uneducated mass of the Anglo-Saxon people, on the Continent as well as in England, by the barrier of a dead language, forms the great distinctive difference between the Anglo-Saxons and the Northmen; and to it may be traced much of the difference in the social condition, spirit, and character of the two branches of the Teutonic or Saxon race at the present day. It is

but about a century ago, about 1740, that this barrier was broken down in Germany, and men of genius or science began to write for the German mind in its own German language. With the exception of Luther's translation of the Bible, little or nothing had been written before the eighteenth century for the German people in the German tongue. That beautiful language itself had become so Latinised by the use and application of Latin in all business and intellectual production—a circumstance which both Goethe and Jean Paul Richter, its greatest masters, deplore—that it was, and to a considerable degree remains in the present times, a different language in writing from the spoken vernacular tongue of the people of Germany. They have to acquire it, as, in some sort, a dead language to them, to understand and enter into the meaning and spirit of their own best writers. Their *Plat Deutch*, the spoken tongue of the mass of the people, does not merely differ as our Scotch, Yorkshire, or Somersetshire dialects differ from English, only in tone of voice, pronunciation, and in the use of a few obsolete words; but in construction and elements, from the too great admixture of foreign elements from the Latin into the cultivated German. A striking proof of this is, that no sentiment, phrase, popular idea, or expression from the writings of Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, Richter, or any other great German writer, is ever heard among the lower classes in Germany, the peasants, labouring people, and uneducated masses; while, with us,

sentiments, expressions, phrases, from Shakspeare, Pope, Burns, Swift, De Foe, Cobbett,—from Cervantes, Le Sage, Moliere,—have crept into common use and application, as proverbial sayings circulating among our totally uneducated classes, who certainly never read those authors, but have caught up from others what is good and natural, because the thought is expressed in language which they are as familiar with as the writer was himself. In our branch of the Saxon race, the intellectuality of the educated class has always worked downwards through a language common to all. The moral influence of this uninterrupted circulation of ideas from the highest to the lowest is very striking in our social condition, and in that of all the people descended from the Northmen, the younger branch of the great Anglo-Saxon race. Under every form of government, whether despotic as in Denmark, aristocratic as in Sweden, democratic as in the United States, or mixed as in England, they are, under all circumstances, distinguished from the other, the old Anglo-Saxon branch, by their strong nationality and distinct national characters. What is this but the diffusion of one mind, one spirit, one mode of thinking and doing, through the whole social body of each of these groups, by a common language and literature, such as it may be, giving one shape and tone to the mind of all? Turn from these groups of the European population, and look at the nationality or national character of the other branch of the race—or rather look for it. Where

is it? Have Prussians, Saxons, Hanoverians, Hessians, Baden-Badenians, or whatever their rulers call them, any jot of this national feeling, any national existence at all? Have the Germans as a whole mass, or has any one group of them, any national character at this day, any common feeling among all classes upon any one subject? There is a want of that circulation of the same mind and intelligence through all classes of the social body, differing only in degree, not in kind, in the most educated and the most ignorant, and of that circulation and interchange of impressions through a language and literature common to all, which alone can animate a population into a nation. It would be a curious subject for the political philosopher to examine, what have been the effects of the literature of a people upon their social condition. English literature works much more powerfully upon the great mass of the English people, although uneducated, and unable to receive its influence and impression direct, than German literature, although much more abundant, works upon the people of Germany. The circulation of ideas stops there at a certain class, and the mass remains unmoved by, impenetrable to, and unintelligent of the storms that may be raging on the surface among the upper educated people. The literature of the Northmen in their own tongue undoubtedly kept alive that common feeling and mind—that common sense on matters of common interest, which in England grew up into our national institutions. They had a

literature of their own, however rude, a history of their own, however barbarous,—had laws, institutions, and social arrangements of their own; and all these through a common language influencing and forming a common mind in all; and when men, or the children of men whose minds had been so formed, came to inhabit, and not merely to conquer, but to colonise a very large proportion of the surface of England, we may safely assume that what we call the Anglo-Saxon institutions of England, and the spirit and character on which alone free institutions can rest, were the natural productions of this national mind, reared by the Northmen in England, and not by the Anglo-Saxons.

What were the peculiar circumstances, in the social condition of this branch of the Saxon race, which kept alive a national literature, history, spirit, and character, and peculiar laws and institutions, while all that was peculiar to or distinctive of the other branch had long been extinguished in Germany, and in a great measure in England? This question can only be answered by looking at the original position of this northern branch of the same stock, on the European soil.

The race of men who under Odin established themselves in the countries north of the Baltic were undoubtedly of Asiatic origin.\* The date of this

\* On the origin of the Teutonic race, and particularly on the earliest Germanic settlement of Scandinavia, see Viktor Rydberg's remarkable work, recently published in an English translation by R. B. Anderson, and entitled "Researches in Teutonic Mythology." London, Swan, Sonnenschein and Co., 1889.

inundation may have been 400 years before or 400 years after the Christian era (antiquaries have their theories for both periods), or there may have been different Odins, or the name may have been generic and applied to all great conquerors; and the causes, as well as the dates of this vast movement, are lost in the night of antiquity. The fact itself admits of no doubt; for it rests not only on the concurrent traditions and religious belief of the people, but upon customs retained by them to a period far within the pale of written history, and which could only have arisen in the country from which they came, not in that to which they had come. The use, for instance, of horse-flesh could never have been an original indigenous Scandinavian custom, because the horse there is an animal too valuable and scarce ever to have been an article of food, as on the plains of Asia; but down to the end of the eleventh century the eating of horse-flesh at the religious feasts, as commemorative of their original country, prevailed, and was the distinctive token of adhering to the religion of Odin; and those who ate horse-flesh were punished with death by Saint Olaf. A plurality of wives also, in which the most Christian of their kings indulged even so late as the twelfth century, was not a custom which, in a poor country like Scandinavia, was likely to prevail, and appears more probably of Asiatic origin. But what could have induced a migrating population from the Tanais (the Don), on which traditionary history fixes their original seat, after reaching the

southern coasts of the Baltic, to have turned to the north and crossed the sea to establish themselves on the bleak inhospitable rocks, and in the severe climate of Scandinavia, instead of overspreading the finer countries on the south side of the Baltic? The political causes from preoccupation, or opposition of tribes as warlike as themselves, cannot now be known from any historical data; but from physical data we may conjecture that such a deviation from what we would consider the more natural run of the tide of a population seeking a living in new homes, may have been preferable to any other course in their social condition. We make a wrong estimate of the comparative facilities of subsisting, in the early ages of mankind, in the northern and southern countries of Europe. If a tribe of red men from the forests of America had been suddenly transported in the days of Tacitus to the forests of Europe beyond the Rhine, where would they, in what is called the hunter state, that is, depending for subsistence on the spontaneous productions of nature, have found in the greatest abundance the means and facilities of subsisting themselves? Unquestionably on the Scandinavian peninsula, intersected by narrow inlets of the sea teeming with fish, by lakes and rivers rich in fish, and in a land covered with forests, in which not only all the wild animals of Europe that are food for man abound, but from the numerous lakes, rivers, ponds, and precipices in this hunting-field, are to be got at and caught with much greater facility than on the boundless plains, on which, from

the Rhine to the Elbe, and from the Elbe to the Vistula, or to the steppes of Asia, there is scarcely a natural feature of country to hem in a herd of wild animals in their flight, and turn them into any particular tract or direction to which the hunters could resort with advantage, and at which they could depend on meeting their prey. At this day Norway is the only country in Europe in which men subsist in considerable comfort in what may be called the hunter state,—that is, upon the natural products of the earth and waters, to which man in the rudest state must have equally had access in all ages,—and derive their food, fuel, clothing, and lodging from the forest, the mountains, the fiords, and rivers, without other aid from agriculture, or the arts of civilised life, than is implied in keeping herds of reindeer in a half tame state, or a few cows upon the natural herbage of the mountain glens. We, in our state of society, do not consider that the superior fertility of the warmer climes and better soils of southern countries, adds nothing to the means of subsistence of those who do not live upon those products of the earth which are obtained by cultivation. A hermit at the present day could subsist himself, from the unaided bounty of nature, much better at the side of a fiord in Norway, than on the banks of the Tiber, or of the Tagus, or of the Thames. Iceland, which we naturally think the last abode to which necessity could drive settlers, had in its abundance of fish, wild fowl, and pasturage for sheep and cows, although the country never pro-



duced corn, such advantages that it was the earliest of modern colonies, and was a favourite resort of emigrants in the ninth century. The Irish monk Dicuil, who wrote in 825 his work "*De Mensura Orbis Terræ*," published by C. A. Walckenaer in Paris in 1828, says that for 100 years, that is from 725, the desire for the hermit life had led many Irish clerks to the islands to the north of the British sea, which, with a fair wind, may be reached in two days' sail from the most northerly British isles. These were most likely the Farey Isles, or Westman Isles. "These isles," he says, "from the creation of the world uninhabited, and unnamed, are now, in 825, deserted by the hermits on account of the northern sea robbers. They have innumerable sheep, and many sorts of sea fowl." This would show that even before the settlement of the Northmen in Iceland about 825 (and in one of the sagas it is said the first settlers found in the Westman Isles books and other articles of Irish priests), the facility of subsistence had drawn some individuals to those rocks in the northern ocean, and they were then known lands. Sweden had a still stronger attraction for the warlike tribes from the interior of Asia, who were pressing upon the population of Europe south of the Baltic, and which has been overlooked by the historians who treat of the migrations of mankind from or to the north in the rude ages. Sweden alone had iron and copper for arms and utensils close to the surface of the earth, and, from the richness of the ores, to be obtained

by the simplest processes of smelting. This natural advantage must, in those ages, have made Sweden a rallying point for the Asiatic populations coming into Europe from the north of Asia, and from countries destitute of the useful metals in any abundant or easily obtained supply. To them Sweden was a Mexico or Peru, or rather an arsenal from which they must draw their weapons before they could proceed to Germany. This circumstance itself may account for the apparently absurd opinion of the swarms of Goths who invaded Europe having come from Scandinavia; and for the apparently absurd tradition of Odin, or the Asiatics invading and occupying Scandinavia in preference to the more genial countries and climes to the south of the Baltic; and for the historical fact of a considerable trade having existed, from the most remote times, between Novgorod and Sweden, and of which, in the very earliest ages, Wisby, in the Isle of Gotland, was the *entrepôt* or meeting-place for the exchange of products. The great importance of this physical advantage of Scandinavia in the abundance of copper and iron, to an ancient warlike population, will be understood best if we take the trouble to calculate what quantity of iron or copper must have been expended in those days as ammunition, in missile weapons, by an ordinary army in an ordinary battle. We cannot reckon less than one ounce weight of iron, on an average, to each arrowhead, from twenty to twenty-four *drop*, or an ounce and a quarter to an ounce and a half, being considered by modern archers the

proper weight of an arrow; and we cannot reckon that bowmen took the field with a smaller provision than four sheaves of arrows, or heads for that number. A sheaf of twenty-four arrows would not keep a bowmen above ten or twelve minutes; and in an ordinary battle of three or four hours, allowing that arrows might be picked up and shot back in great numbers, we cannot suppose a smaller provision belonging to and transported with a body of bowmen than ninety-six rounds each, which, for a body of 4000 men only, would amount to above fourteen tons' weight of iron in arrowheads alone. For casting spears or javelins, of which in ancient armies, as in the Roman, more use was made than of the bow, we cannot reckon less than six ounces of iron to the spear head, or less than two spears to each man; and this gives us nearly two tons' weight more of iron for 4000 men as their provision in this kind of missile. Of hand-weapons, such as swords, battleaxes, halberds, spears, and of defensive armour, such as head-pieces and shields, which every man had, and coats of mail or armour, which some had, it is sufficient to observe that all of it would be lost iron to the troops who were defeated, or driven from the field of battle leaving their killed and wounded behind, and all had to be replaced by a fresh supply of iron. We see in this great amount of iron or bronze arms, to be provided and transported with even a very small body of men in ancient times, why a single battle was almost always decisive, and every thing was staked upon the issue of a single day;

and we see why defeat, as in the case of the battle of Hastings and many others, was almost always irrecoverable with the same troops. They had no ammunition on the losing side after a battle. We may judge from these views how important and valuable it must have been for an invading army of Goths, or whatever name they bore, coming from Asia to Europe, to have got possession of Sweden; so important, indeed, that it is reasonable to believe that if ever an Asiatic people invaded Europe north of the Carpathian mountains, the invaders would first of all proceed north along the Vistula and other rivers falling into the Baltic, and put themselves in communication, by conquest or commerce, with the country which supplied their ammunition, and would then issue armed from the north, and break into the Roman empire, and be considered as a people coming originally from some northern hive. Scandinavia certainly never had food for more human beings than its present inhabitants, and could never have poured out the successive multitudes who, by all accounts, are said to have come in from the north upon the Roman provinces; but in this view it is likely that the flood of people actually did pour in from the north, to which the march must of necessity have been first directed from Asia. It may be objected to these views, that iron or metal was not of such prime necessity as we make it to these barbarians in their warfare; that flint or other stones were much used for arrow-heads, and that we find such commonly in museums.

and even stones that have evidently been intended for javelins or battleaxes. If we look, however, at what exists out of museums, we find that stones which admit of being chiselled, sharpened, or brought to an edge or point that would pierce cloth, leather, or any defensive covering, and inflict a deadly wound, are among the rarest productions. Granite, gneiss, sandstone, limestone, all rise in lumps and cubical masses, scarcely to be reduced by any labour or skill to shapes suitable for a spear or arrowhead. Countries of vast extent are without stone at all near the surface of the earth, and many without such a kind of stone as could be edged or pointed, without such skill and labour as would make stone arrowheads more scarce and valuable than metal ones. Of such stones as might be substituted for metal in missile weapons it happens, singularly enough, that Scandinavia itself is more productive than any part of the north of Europe, if we except perhaps the districts of England abounding in flint. Our ordinary museum arrowheads of stone, or what our country people, when they turn them up by the plough, call elf-bolts, from an obscure impression that they do not belong to the soil, but are, from the regularity of their shape, an artificial production, are in reality the organic fossil called by geologists the Belemnite, which, tapering to a point at both ends from regular equally poised sides, is, in its natural fossil state, an arrowhead. This fossil, and the sharp schists, which could easily be formed into effective points

for missile weapons, abound particularly in that great indenture of the Norwegian coast called the Skager Rack, and in the Middle Ages called Viken, or the Wick, or Vik, between the Naze of Norway and the Sound or the coast of Jutland, and from which Pinkerton conjectures the Scottish Picts or Victi, if they were a Gothic tribe, originally proceeded. He founds his conjecture on the similarity of name; and the Vikings or pirates probably derived their name from this district of Viken in which they harboured, and for the obvious reason that here the means of replenishing their ships with the missile arms of the age abounded. Hardsteinagriot, or small hard stones, appear to have been even an article of export at a very early date from Thelemark, and to have been shipped from the coast to which they were transported in quantities of 1500 loads at a time from the interior.\* Stones for throwing by hand (the sling, on account of the space required around the slinger, seems never to have been in use) were so important an article in the sea fights of those times, that the ships of war, or long-ships, were always accompanied on the viking cruises by transports or ships of burden, to carry the plunder, clothes, and provisions, the ships of war being loaded with arms and stones. We find two transport vessels to ten ships of war in the Saga of Saint Olaf, as the number with him when he left his ships of war at the mouth of the Humber,

\* *Krafts Beskrivelse*, III. 154. *Kong Sverre's Saga*, by Jacob Aal, note on cap. 91.—L.

after a long viking expedition, and returned to Norway, with 220 men, in his two transport ships. Earl Ragnvald, the son of Kol, invaded Earl Paul in Orkney with six ships of war, five boats of a size to cross the sea from Norway, and three ships of burden;\* and in all their expeditions ships of burden were required in some proportion to the ships of war, owing to the great stowage necessary for their weapons. In the Færeyinga Saga, in which the exploits of a viking† called Sigmund Bresteson are related minutely, we read of his walking across a small island on the Swedish coast, and discovering five ships of another viking at anchor on the opposite side, and he returned to his own ships, passed the whole night in landing his goods and plunder, and breaking up stones on shore, and loading his vessel with them, and at daylight he went to attack the other viking, and captured his vessels. In the engagement of Earl Paul in Orkney with the friends of Earl Ragnvald he refused the assistance of men from Erling of Tankerness (Tanskaruness), off which place the battle was fought,

\* Olaf's Saga, cap. 27. Orkneyinga Saga.—L.

† Viking and sea-king are not synonymous, although, from the common termination in *king*, the words are used, even by our historians, indiscriminately. The sea-king was a man connected with a royal race either of the small kings of the country, or of the Harfager family, and who by right received the title of king as soon as he took the command of men, although only of a single ship's crew, and without having any land or kingdom. The viking is a word not connected with the word *kongr* or king. Vikings were merely pirates, alternately peasants and pirates, deriving the name of viking from the viks, wicks, or inlets on the coast in which they harboured with their long ships or rowing galleys. Every sea-king was a viking, but every viking was not a sea-king.—L.

because he had as many men as could find room to fight in his vessels, but required his assistance in carrying out stones from the shore to his vessels as long as the enemy would allow it to be done safely. Stones could not be transported or distributed in a conflict on land; and on this account the Northmen appear generally to have kept to their ships in their battles, and, even when marauding on land, to have had their ships far up the rivers to retire upon. This circumstance, namely, the great bulk in stowage, and in transport by land, of the usual arms of the age, arrows, casting spears, and stones, in any considerable quantities for a body of troops, and the difficulty of concentrating stores of them just at the spot where they are needed on land, accounts in a great measure for the success of comparatively small bodies of invaders landing on the coasts of England, or Normandy, in those ages. The invaders had the advantage of a supply of weapons in their vessels to retire upon, or to advance from; while their opponents having once expended what they carried with them, which could scarcely exceed the consumption in one ordinary battle of a few hours' duration, would be totally without missiles.

In the settlement of an Asiatic population in Scandinavia, which, whatever may have been the cause or inducement for preferring that side of the Baltic, undoubtedly did take place at an unascertained date, under a chief called Odin, we find a remarkable difference of social arrangement—and a sufficient cause for it—from that social arrangement which grew up



among the people who invaded and seized on the ancient Roman empire. The latter were settling in countries of which the land was already appropriated; and however warlike and numerous we may conceive these invaders to have been, they could be but a handful compared to the numbers of the old indigenous inhabitants. They of necessity, and for security, had to settle as they had conquered, in military array, under local military chiefs whose banners they had followed in war, and were, for safety and mutual protection, obliged to rally around in peace. The people had the same military duties to perform, to their chiefs, and their chiefs to the general commander or king, as in the field. They were, in fact, an army in cantonments in an enemy's country; and this, which is the feudal system, is the natural system of social arrangement in every country taken possession of by invaders in spite of the indigenous original inhabitants. It is found in several provinces of India, in several of the South Sea Islands, and wheresoever men have come into a country and seized the land of the first occupants. But where there is none to disturb the invaders—where they are themselves the first occupants, this military arrangement is unnecessary, and therefore unnatural. The first invaders of Scandinavia have entered into an uninhabited or unappropriated country, or if inhabited, it has been by a wandering or very unwarlike population, like the present Laplanders, or the Fenni of Tacitus. We are entitled to draw this conclusion from the circumstance that these invaders did not occupy and sit

down in the country feudally. Each man possessed his lot of land without reference to or acknowledgment of any other man,—without any local chief to whom his military service or other quit-rent for his land was due,—without tenure from, or duty or obligation to any superior, real or fictitious, except the general sovereign. The individual settler held his land, as his descendants in Norway still express it, by the same right as the king held his crown—by *udal* right, or *odel*,—that is, noble right; subject to no feudal burden, servitude, escheat, or forfeiture to a superior from any feudal casualty. This was the natural arrangement of society, and the natural principle of possession in a country not previously occupied, and in which the settlers had consequently no reason for submitting to feudal obligations and to a military organisation. When the very same people, these unfeudalised Northmen, came to conquer and settle in Normandy, in a country appropriated and peopled, and which they had to defend as well as to invade and occupy, they naturally adopted the feudal social arrangement necessary for their security, and maintained it in all its rigour. In the very same century the kinsman of the same chief, Rolf Ganger, who was conquering and feudally occupying Normandy, came to settle in Iceland, where they had no occasion for the military organisation and principle of the feudal system in the unappropriated, uninhabited island; and they occupied it not feudally, but, as their ancestors had occupied the mother country itself, *udally*. The *udal* landowners, although

exempt from all feudal services, exactions, or obligations to any other man as their local chief, or, in feudal language, the superior of their lands, were by no means exempt from services or taxes to the king or general chief, who was udal-born to the sovereignty of the whole or of a part of the country, and was acknowledged by the Thing or assembly of the landowners of the district. The kingly power was as great as in any feudally constituted country, either for calling out men and ships for his military expeditions abroad or at home, or for raising taxes. The scat was a fixed land-tax, paid to the king either in money or in kind, that is, in natural products of the land, and was collected by his officers yearly in each district, or even let for a proportion of the amount to his friends or lenders during life or pleasure. This class of lenders appears to have been the nearest approach to a feudal class in their social arrangements; but the *len* was a temporary, not an hereditary holding, and was not accompanied by any feudal privileges or baronial powers. The kings also received in their royal progresses through the country free lodging and entertainment for themselves and a certain fixed number of *hirdmen*, that is a court, for a certain fixed number of days in each district. All the most minute particulars of the supplies which each farm or little estate—for each little farm was a distinct udal estate—had to furnish, the turns in which each locality was liable to this entertaining of the king and court, the time and numbers of the court followers to be entertained,

were matters of fixed law, and settled by the Things of each district. In these circuits the kings assembled the district Things, and with the assistance of the lawman, who appears to have been a local judge, either hereditary or appointed by the Thing, settled disputes between parties, and fixed the amount of money compensation or fine to be paid to the injured party. All offences and crimes, from the murder of the king himself down to the very slightest injury, or infraction of law, were valued and compensated for in money, and divided in certain portions between the party injured (or his next of kin if he was murdered,) and the king. The offender was an outlaw until he, or his friends for him, had paid the mulct or compensation, and could be slain, without any mulct or fine for his murder. The friends of the injured or murdered party could refuse to accept of any compensation in money, but could lawfully wait an opportunity, and take their revenge in kind. The king could only remit his own share of the mulct, but not that of the friends of the murdered party; and not to revenge an injury received and not compromised by a compensation, appears to have been considered highly dishonourable. The revenues of the kings appear to have been drawn, in some considerable proportion, from this source. When not engaged in warfare they appear to have been subsisted, as their ordinary mode of living, on these royal circuits or progresses through the country. The kings had no fixed residence or palace in Norway; but had estates or royal domains in every

district, and houses on them in which they could lodge for a time, and receive what was due for their entertainment in victuals from the neighbourhood; but these houses appear to have been no better mansions than the houses on any other estates, and the kings were usually lodged, with their courts, as well as subsisted, by the landowners or bondes. This usage of royal progresses for the subsistence of the royal household appears to have been introduced into England at the Norman, or rather at the previous Danish conquest; and the purveyance for it was a royal right, which continued to be exercised down to the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

Before the introduction or general diffusion of writing, it is evident that a class of men whose sole occupation was to commit to memory and preserve the laws, usages, precedents, and details of all those civil affairs and rights, and to whose fidelity in relating former transactions implicit confidence could be given, must of necessity have existed in society—must have been in every locality; and from the vast number and variety of details in every district, and the great interests of every community, must have been esteemed and recompensed in proportion to their importance in such a social state. This class were the skalds—the men who were the living books, to be referred to in every case of law or property in which the past had to be applied to the present. Before the introduction of Christianity, and with Christianity the use of written documents, and the

diffusion, by the church establishment, of writing in every locality, the skald must have been among the pagan landowners what the parish priest and his written record were in the older Christianised countries of Europe. In these all civil affairs were in written record either of the priest or the lawyer; and the skalds, in these Christianised countries, were merely a class of wandering troubadours, poets, story-tellers, minnesingers, entertained, like the dwarfs, court-jesters, or jugglers, by the great barons at their castles, for the entertainment which their songs, music, stories, or practical jokes might afford. Here, in this pagan country, they were a necessary and most important element in the social structure. They were the registrars of events affecting property, and filled the place and duty of the lawyer and scribe in a society in which law was very complicated; the succession to property, through affinity and family connection, very intricate, from the want of family surnames, and the equal rights of all children; and in which a priesthood like that of the Church of Rome, spread over the country, and acquainted more or less with letters, the art of writing, and law, was totally wanting. The skalds of the north disappeared at once when Christian priests were established through the country. They were superseded in their utility by men of education, who knew the art of writing; and the country had no feudal barons to maintain such a class for amusement only. We hear little of the skalds after the first half of the twelfth century; and they are not quoted at all in the portion of

Magnus Erlingsson's reign given by Snorre Sturlason within the twelfth century.

Besides the payment of scat, and the maintenance of the king's household in the royal progresses, the whole body of the landowners were bound to attend the king in arms, and with ships, whenever they were called upon to serve him either at home or abroad. The king appears, in fact, not only not to have wanted any prerogative that feudal sovereigns of the same times possessed, but to have had much more power than the monarchs of other countries. The middle link in the feudal system—a nobility of great crown vassals, with their sub-vassals subservient to them as their immediate superiors, not to the crown—was wanting in the social structure of the Northmen. The kingly power working directly on the people was more efficient; and the kings, and all who had a satisfactory claim to the royal power, had no difficulty in calling out the people for war expeditions. These expeditions, often merely predatory in their object, consisted either of general levies, in which all able-bodied men, and all ships, great and small, had to follow the king; or of certain quota of men, ships, and provisions, furnished by certain districts according to fixed law. All the country along the coasts of Norway, and as far back into the land “as the salmon swims up the rivers,” was divided into ship-districts or ship-rathes; and each district had to furnish ships of a certain size, a certain number of men, and a certain equipment, according to its capability; and other inland districts

had to furnish cattle and other provision in fixed numbers. This arrangement was made by Harald Harfager's successor, Hakon, who reigned between 935 and 961; and as Hakon was the foster-son of Athelstan of England, and was bred up to manhood in his court, it is not improbable that this arrangement may have been borrowed from the similar arrangement made by King Alfred for the defence of the English coast against the Northmen; unless we take the still more probable conjecture that Alfred borrowed it himself from them, as they were certainly in all naval and military affairs superior to his own people in that age. It is to be observed, that, for the Northmen, these levies for predatory expeditions were by no means unpopular or onerous. "To gather property" by plundering the coasts of cattle, meal, malt, wool, slaves, was a favourite summer occupation. When the crops were in the ground in spring, the whole population, which was seafaring as well as agricultural in its habits, was altogether idle until harvest; and the great success in amassing booty, as vikings, on the coasts, made the Leding, as it was called, a favourite service during many reigns: and it appears that the service might be commuted sometimes into a war tax, when it was inconvenient to go on the levy. Every man, it is to be observed, who went upon these expeditions, was udal born to some portion of land at home; that is, had certain udal rights of succession, or of purchase, or of partition, connected with the little estate of the family of which he was a member.



All these complicated rights and interests connecting people settled in Northumberland, East Anglia, Normandy, or Iceland, with landed property situated in the valleys of Norway, required a body of men, like the skalds, whose sole occupation was to record in their stories trustworthy accounts, not only of the historical events, but of the deaths, intermarriages, pedigrees, and other family circumstances of every person of any note engaged in them. We find, accordingly, that the sagas are, as justly observed by Pinkerton, rather memoirs of individuals than history. They give the most careful heraldic tracing of every man's kin they speak of, because he was kin to landowners at home, or they were kin to him. In such a social state we may believe that the class of skalds were not, as we generally suppose, merely a class of story-tellers, poets, or harpers, going about with gossip, song, and music; but were interwoven with the social institutions of the country, and had a footing in the material interests of the people. To take an interest in the long-past events of history is an acquired intellectual taste, and not at all the natural taste of the unlettered man. When we are told of the Norman baron in his castle-hall, or the Iceland peasant's family around their winter fireside in their turf-built huts, sitting down in the tenth or eleventh century to listen to, get by heart, and transmit to the rising generation, the accounts of historical events of the eighth or ninth century in Norway, England, or Denmark, we feel that, however pleasing this picture may be to the fancy, it

is not true to nature,—not consistent with the human mind in a rude illiterate social state. But when we consider the nature of the peculiar udal principle by which land or other property was transmitted through the social body of these Northmen, we see at once a sufficient foundation in the material interests, both of the baron and the peasant, for the support of a class of traditionary relaters of past events. Every person in every expedition was udal born to something at home,—to the kingdom, or to a little farm; and this class were the recorders of the vested rights of individuals, and of family alliances, feuds, or other interests, when written record was not known. For many generations after the first Northmen settled in England or Normandy, it must, from the uncertain issue of their hostilities with the indigenous inhabitants, have been matter of deep interest to every individual to know how it stood with the branch of the family in possession of the piece of udal land in the mother-country to which he also was udal born, that is, had certain eventual rights of succession; and whether to return and claim their share of any succession which may have opened up to them in Norway must have been a question with settlers in Northumberland, Normandy, or Iceland, which could only be solved by the information derived from such a class as the skalds. Before the clergy by their superior learning extinguished the vocation of this class among the Northmen, the skalds appear to have been frequently employed also as confidential messengers or ambas-

sadors ; as, for instance, in the proposal of a marriage between Olaf King of Norway and the daughter of King Olaf of Sweden, and of a peace between the two countries to be established by this alliance. The skalds, by their profession, could go from court to court without suspicion, and in comparative safety; because, being generally natives of Iceland, they had no hereditary family feuds with the people of the land, no private vengeance for family injuries to apprehend ; and being usually rewarded by gifts of rings, chains, goblets, and such trinkets, they could, without exciting suspicion, carry with them the tokens by which, before the art of writing was common in courts, the messenger who had a private errand to unfold was accredited. When kings or great people met in those ages they exchanged gifts or presents with each other, and do so still in the East ; and the original object of this custom was that each should have tokens known to the other, by which any bearer afterwards should be accredited to the original owner of the article sent with him in token, and even the amount of confidence to be reposed in him denoted. We, with writing at command, can scarcely perhaps conceive the shifts people must have been put to, when even the most simple communication or order had to be delivered *viva voce* to some agent who was to carry it, and who had to produce some credential or token that he was to be believed. Every act of importance between distant parties had to be transacted by tokens. Our wonder and incredulity cease when we consider that

such a class of men as those who composed and transmitted this great mass of saga literature were evidently a necessary element in the social arrangements of the time and people, and, together with their literature or traditional songs and stories, were intimately connected with the material interests of all, and especially of those who had property and power. They were not merely a class of wandering poets, troubadours, or story-tellers, living by the amusement they afforded to a people in a state too rude to support any class for their intellectual amusement only. The skalds, who appear to have been divided into two classes,—poets, who composed or remembered verses in which events were related, or chiefs and their deeds commemorated; and sagamen, who related historical accounts of transactions past or present,—were usually, it may be said exclusively, of Iceland.

It is usually considered a wonderful and unaccountable phenomenon in the history of the Middle Ages, that an island like Iceland, producing neither corn nor wood, situated in the far north, ice-bound in part even in summer, surrounded by a wild ocean, and shaken and laid waste by volcanic fire, should, instead of being an uninhabited land, or inhabited only by rude and ignorant fishermen, have been the centre of intelligence in the north, and of an extensive literature. It is wonderful; but, if we consider the causes, the phenomenon is naturally and soberly accounted for. Iceland was originally colonised by the most cultivated and peaceful of the mother-

country; the nobility and people of the highest civilisation then in the north flying, in the ninth century, and especially after the battle of Hafersfiord, from what they considered the tyranny of Harald Harfager, and the oppression of the feudal system which he was attempting to establish in Norway. It was an emigration from principle. The very poor and ignorant, and those who merely sought gain without any higher motive for their emigration, could not go to Iceland; because a suitable vessel, with the necessary outfit and stock, could only be afforded by people of the highest class, and they only had to dread the jealousy and power of Harfager. Their friends, retainers, housemen, and servants attached to their families, went with them; but the *landnammen*, the *origines gentis*, were the sons and brothers of the nobles and kings, as they were called, who from the very same cause, the dread and hatred of Harfager's power, went out to plunder and conquer on the coasts of England and France. At the very same period that Rolf Ganger set out on his expedition, which ended in the conquest of Normandy, one of his brothers sought a peaceful asylum in the uninhabited Iceland; and the more peaceful of the higher class in those days were, we may presume, the most civilised and cultivated of their age. New England, perhaps, and Iceland, are the only modern colonies ever founded on principle, and peopled at first from higher motives than want or gain; and we see at this day a lingering spark in each of a higher mind than in

populations which have set out from a lower level. The original settlers in Iceland carried with them whatever there was of civilisation or intelligence in Norway; and for some generations at least were free from the internal feuds, and always were free from the external wars and depredations on their coasts, which kept other countries in a state of barbarism. They enjoyed security of person and property. The means of subsistence in Iceland were not so very different from the means in Norway, nor of so much more difficult attainment, as might on a hasty view be supposed. The south coast of Iceland is not higher north than the country about Throndhjem fiord, and the most northerly part is barely within the Arctic Circle. A large proportion of the population of Norway lived in those ages, and live now, in as high a latitude; and, from not being surrounded by the ocean on all sides, in a severer climate; and under the local disadvantage, from the shape of the country, that the Fielde or mountain ridges in Norway approach much closer to the shore, and leave much less flat level pasture land between them and the sea than the mountains of Iceland. The cultivation of corn is as much out of the question in a great proportion of Norway as in Iceland. The people in the upland districts of every province of Norway, and almost all the population north of the Namsen river, draw the main part of their subsistence at present from the natural products of the land and water,—the pasture for their cattle, and the fishing in the rivers, the lakes, and the sea.

These natural products are as abundant in Iceland as in Norway; and the butter, cheese, wool, dried meat, fish, oil, feathers, skins, the wadmal or coarse woollen cloth, and the coarse linen spun and woven in their households, would be more in demand, more readily exchangeable, and of higher comparative value in former times, than such Icelandic products are now. With the surplus of such articles beyond their own consumption the Icelanders could supply their own most pressing wants. These were for corn and wood—articles of first necessity, which did not admit of the population sinking into indolence and apathy in providing them. An intercourse and regular trade with England and Denmark for meal and malt, and with Norway for wood, tools of metal, and other necessities of life, must have existed from the first years of the colonisation of Iceland. The Icelanders had consequently from the first more easy and regular opportunities of visiting foreign countries, and returning again to their own, than the natives of any other country in the north in those ages. They appear also to have traded without molestation, and never to have molested others. No Icelandic viking is mentioned in the sagas, even in the ages when a viking cruise was deemed an honourable occupation. Iceland men are mentioned in the sagas, occasionally, as being in the service of vikings of Norway, as hired men; but no long-ship, or viking belonging to Iceland, is mentioned. The necessity of trading in peace across the sea, and of giving no pretext for capture or

retaliation on Iceland vessels, may have been one cause for this remarkable abstinence from the favourite pursuit of the nobles of those ages in other northern countries. It could not be from the cause to which it is usually attributed, the want of wood in the country to build long-ships. The Icelanders had to buy merchant ships in Norway of a size to cross the sea, and appear to have had them in abundance; and the same class of people who fitted out viking expeditions in other countries could have purchased long-ships as easily as ships of burden. Their neighbours in the Farey Islands were equally destitute of wood; yet they had a very celebrated viking, Sigmund Bresteson. The Orkney Islands had their Svein, a renowned viking, so late as the twelfth century. But in none of the sagas in which the exploits of these vikings are related, is there any mention of any Iceland viking at any period. The fair inference is, that the men who emigrated from Norway to Iceland, and who were of the class and had the means to fit out long-ships for piracy, were men more advanced in civilisation and intelligence, and of higher principle, than men of the same class in that age in the other northern countries. In all the sagas there appears a kind of reluctance to dwell upon or approve of that part of the hero's life passed in viking expeditions, or in "gathering property" by piracy. One imagines, at least, that in the Saga of Olaf Trygvesson, of Olaf the Saint, and of other great chiefs, the saga-man shows a disposition to hurry over this part of their



lives, to throw it into the years of extreme youth, and not to approve himself of that part of his tale. The comparatively safe intercourse which the Icelanders undoubtedly had with other countries gave them a higher education, that is, the means of acquiring a greater stock of information on what was doing in other countries, than any other people of those times. When we consider that these Icelandic colonists were connected by the udal law of succession with the principal families and estates in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, England, and France, and were deeply interested in the conquests, revolutions, battles, or changes going on, and in which their friends and relations were the chief actors, we can understand that an historical spirit must have grown up in such a population—a great desire to know, and a great talent to remember and relate. Heritable interests and rights of families in Iceland were involved in what was going on in Normandy and Northumberland as much as in Thronthjem; and the consideration in which the skald or sagaman who could give accounts of such events was held, may not be exaggerated in the sagas. In a community of such colonists, the class of skalds remembering and relating past transactions was an essential element, and must have been held in the highest honour. To return home to Iceland appears, indeed, to have been the end which the most favoured skald at the courts of kings proposed to himself. From their opportunities of visiting various countries, the Icelandic skalds were undoubtedly

the educated men of the times when books did not in any way contribute to intelligence, or to forming the mind ; but only extensive intercourse with men, and the information gathered from it. Having by the lapse of time no family feuds even with the people of Norway, no injuries, national or private, to avenge or to fear vengeance for from others, the Icelander could travel through other countries on private or public affairs with a degree of personal security which people of the highest rank and power belonging to the country were strangers to in those unhappy ages. This advantage was sufficient of itself to make them a useful class in every court. They were not only neutral men in every strife ; but, from their travel and experience, men of intelligence, prudence, and safe counsel, compared to men of no intellectual culture at all, and acquainted only with arms and violence. They had also the advantage of speaking in its greatest purity what was the court language in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, England, and at Rouen.\* The moral influence which the skalds enjoyed, as counsellors and personal friends and advisers of many of the kings, may not be exaggerated in the sagas ; for it appears to be that which knowledge and education would naturally obtain amidst ignorance and barbarity.

\* Normandy, it is to be always remembered in reading the history of those ages, was conquered, but not colonised, as Iceland and Northumberland were colonised, by the introduction of a totally new population, with their own laws, manners, and language. In Normandy, so early as the time of Duke Richard, the second in descent from Rolf Ganger, his son had to be sent to Bayeux to acquire the pure northern language, it having been already corrupted at the court.—L.

The class of skalds and saga-men, supported by intellectual labour in the north of Europe, may not have been very numerous at any one time; but, owing to the favourable circumstances peculiar to the Icelanders, the profession centred in Iceland. We hear of no skalds of any other country, not even of Norway. All the intellectual labour of the kind required in the north of Europe was derived from Iceland. We may surely reckon the population in the north of Europe using a common tongue in those times,—of Scandinavia, Denmark, Jutland, and Schlesvig; of the kingdom of Northumberland, East Anglia, and of parts of Mercia; of Normandy, in some proportion of its inhabitants; of the Hebrides and Isle of Man, in some proportion; of the Orkney, Shetland, and Færey Islands, altogether,—to have amounted to two millions of people. Small as the demand might be for intellectual gratification among these two millions, yet they were scattered over countries widely apart, and they used a common tongue, and had a real and effective relationship of families among them all; and the desire for news of what was doing in other lands, and for narratives of events which might be of importance in their family interests, would be sufficient to give an impulse to such a small population as that of Iceland, which never exceeded sixty or sixty-four thousand people, to give employment to all the surplus talent of such a population, and to keep up a literary tone, if it may be so called, of the public mind in such a handful of people. Men of any

talent would naturally endeavour to qualify themselves for that profession in which several, and probably a considerable number, attained distinction, wealth, or high consideration. It was better than the chance of advantage from embarking as a private seaman or man-at-arms in viking forays and cruises under a sea-king; better than staying at home tending cattle, cutting peats, making hay, and catching and curing fish. The same motives operate in the same way at this day in the social economy of Iceland. The youth of talents and ambition study, come to the university of Copenhagen, become often men of very great attainments and learning, and with as few chances or examples before them of substantial reward for their labours as the skalds, their predecessors, could have had. The impulse to mind in any community being once given, either by accidental or physical circumstances, the movement in the same direction goes on and seems to be permanent — never to cease. The perpetuity of intellectual movement, of the direction of mind and mental energy in the same way, even when laws, government, and all social arrangements, and even religion itself, are altered, and the old forms not even remembered, is one of the most singular and interesting of the phenomena in the nature of man. It is strikingly illustrated in Iceland. The Icelandic youth prepare themselves now for a learned profession, as the skalds did 800 years ago, exactly from the same intellectual impulse, although in a different field; and the movement of

the public mind towards intellectual occupation appears to have remained in this small community unchanged, undiminished, and only less visible because it is not now the only community in the north with the same movement. The continued tendency of mind in Iceland to literary pursuits appears when we compare them, in numbers not exceeding at present 56,000\* individuals, with any equal number of the British population. The Icelanders had a printing-press among them in the first half of the sixteenth century; and many works in Latin and in Icelandic have been printed at Skalholt, Holar, and other places. The counties of Orkney and Shetland, with an equal population,—of Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, with probably double the population,—have not at this day any such intellectual movement, or any press that could print a book, or any book produced within themselves to print. The whole Celtic population in Scotland, since the beginning of time, never produced in their language a tithe of the literature that has been composed and printed in Icelandic by the Icelanders for their own use within this century. The modern literature of Iceland, or even its saga literature, may not be considered by the critic of a very high class or value, or of merit in itself; but, in judging of the intellectuality of a people, the philosopher will regard its amount and diffusion as of much more importance than its quality. That belongs to the author, and measures merely the genius and talents of the individual: the

\* The present population of Iceland is about 70,000 individuals.

amount and diffusion measure the intellectual condition of the society. Apply this measure to any town or county in Great Britain of 56,000 inhabitants, and we will find little reason to boast of a more advanced intellectual condition among us than that which the Icelanders appear to retain at this day from bygone times, when an intellectual character was impressed on the public mind in their small community by the skalds; and little reason to believe that the monkish historians of the Anglo-Saxons, in the same ages in which the skalds flourished, have left more deep or influential traces of their literature in the parts of Europe in which they were the only men engaged in those ages in intellectual occupation, than the skalds have done in the narrow circle in which alone they could have influence on posterity.

In these observations on the saga literature, nothing is said of or allowed for the Runic writing inscribed on rocks, monumental stones, wooden staves, drinking-cups of horn or metal, arms, or ornaments, for which at one period a high antiquity was claimed. It seems to be now admitted that a Runic character, apparently borrowed from the Gothic and Roman, and adapted to the material on which it was usually cut, viz., hard stone or wood, by converting all the curves of the letters into straight lines for the facility of cutting, has existed from a very early age among the Northmen. It would, indeed, be absurd to suppose that an intelligent people roaming over the world, who had appeared in the Mediterranean in

the days of Charlemagne, and had a regular body of troops, the Varings, in the pay of the Greek Emperors at Constantinople, should not have adopted, or imitated, what would be useful at home, as far as applicable to their means. This appears to have been precisely the extent to which Runic writing was applied. From want of means to write,—that is, the want of the parchment, paper, ink, and writing tools,—the writing in Runic was almost entirely confined to short monumental inscriptions recording the death of an individual, the name of the person who erected the stone to his memory, and also the name of the person who cut the letters—a proof that the use of the Runic characters was rare, and confined to a few. Of these Runic inscriptions, of which a thousand or more have been examined by antiquaries, few can be placed before the introduction of Christianity in the eleventh century. The sign of the cross may, in the dreams of the zealous antiquary, appear the sign of Thor's hammer; but there is no evidence that the pagans used such a symbol, and the obvious interpretation of such a mark upon a tombstone is that it belongs to the age of Christianity. Torfæus, whose antiquarian zeal was tempered with a love of truth, and whose antiquarian knowledge has not been surpassed, says\* not only that the Runic inscriptions throw no light upon history, but are so intricate and confused, that what you may imagine you catch by the eye you cannot by the understanding; and in proof of his remark he refers

\* Torfæus, *Series Regum Dan.*, cap. viii.—L.

to conflicting interpretations of the two greatest Runic antiquaries, Worm and Verelius, of the meaning of Runic inscriptions, on which they both agree perfectly as to the strokes or incisions in the stone. Bartholinus\* also says, in his Danish Antiquities, that excepting four or five, none of these Runic inscriptions are in any way illustrative of history, and in general are so obscure that the names of the persons for whom the stones are erected can scarcely be extracted, and much is matter of mere conjecture. The opinions of these great antiquaries are singularly confirmed by the recent discovery made by chemical science, that one of the few Runic inscriptions supposed to be illustrative of history,—one upon a rock at Hoby, near Runamo, in the Swedish province of Bleking, which is mentioned by Saxo Grammaticus as being, in his time (namely, about 1160), considered inexplicable, and which modern Runic scholars interpreted a few years ago to relate to the battle of Bravalla fought about the year 680,—is in reality no inscription at all, but a mere *lusus naturæ*; merely veins of one substance interspersed in the body of another substance, and forming marks which resemble Runic letters in the fancy of the antiquary, but which is an appearance in rocks of granitic formation with veins of chlorite interspersed, not unfamiliar to the eye of the mineralogist. Another of the Runic inscriptions, supposed to be illustrative of history, is that on a rock called Korpeklinte, in

\* Bartholinus, *Antiq. Dan.*, l. i. cap. 9.—L.



the island of Gotland, which, in Runic characters, told that

“Aar halftridium tusanda utdreg Helge med Gutanum sinum ;”\*

that is, “in the year half three thousand,—videlicet, two thousand five hundred,—went out Helge with his Goths.” This inscription must be, as Worm himself admits, a gross fabrication; for the pagan Northmen did not reckon by years, but by winters, and could have known nothing of the computation of time from the creation of the world, which is derived from the Bible, and was unknown to them in the year of the world 2500. But before the year 1636 somebody had been at the trouble to attempt to impose upon the world by this inscription in Runic letters, although in modern language, and of modern conception. We may believe that inscriptions on stones in memory of the dead,—rude calendars cut in wood,—charms on amulets, rings, shields, or swords,—and tokens of recognition to be sent by messengers to accredit them to friends at a distance, may have existed among the Northmen from their first arrival in Europe; and Odin himself may have invented or used the Runic character in this way: but we have no ground for believing that any distinct use of writing,† *currente*

\* I have not been able to find this Runic inscription so as to verify it.

† A remarkable proof how little Runic was known, or used, is, that a certain Od Sveinbjornson gave notice to Snorre Sturlason of the conspiracy against his life in September, 1240, in Runic.<sup>1</sup> But neither

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<sup>1</sup> In Sturlunga Saga, ch. 154, it is stated that Snorre had a letter, which Od Sveinbjornson at Alptanes had sent him, that it was written in *stafkavla-letr* (a kind of Runic letters), and that it was not read. A *stafkarl* is a poor beggar (a

*calamo*, applicable to the transmission of historical events, was known before the introduction of Christianity, and of letters with Christianity, in the eleventh century, or was diffused before the diffusion of Church establishments over the north. If the Runic had been a written character among the Northmen of the ninth century, it must have been transported to Iceland, in which the first settlers were not of the rude and ignorant, but of the most cultivated of their age in Norway; but few, if any, Runic inscriptions of a date prior to the introduction of Christianity are found in Iceland. If they had possessed the use of written characters, as they had unquestionably a literature in Iceland, it would be absurd to believe that they had not applied the one to the other; but for two hundred and forty years—that is, until the time of Are—should have committed the sagas to memory, instead of to parchment or paper. Are himself would have used the Runic character, if writing Runic had been diffused among the Northmen; and although no manuscript of the time of Are exists, but only early copies of his writings, yet among the mass of sagas in manuscript some must have been in Runic characters, if Runic writing had been diffused among the Icelanders. No

Snorre (certainly not one of the unlearned of his age in the saga or Icelandic literature), nor any of those with him at the time, could read the Runic characters; and Snorre in consequence fell a victim to the conspiracy, and was murdered in his house on the 22d September, 1240. —*Schöning, Pref. to Heimskringla.*—L.

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“*staff carle*”), and *stafkarla-letr* must be a peculiar kind of secret runes. This is, however, no evidence that Snorre and those with him could not read the ordinary runes.

Runic manuscript, however, on parchment or paper, of unquestionable antiquity and authenticity, has ever been discovered. A fragment, entitled "*Historia Hialmari Regis Bjornlandiæ atque Thulemarkiæ ex Fragmento Runici MS. literis recentioribus descripta cum genuina versione Johannis Peringskoldi*," without date, place of publication, or reference to where the original Runic manuscript on skin or paper is to be found, is evidently a translation of a part of the Saga of Hialmar into Runic letters, for the purpose of imposing on the public, and is to be classed with the Korpeklinte inscription. The controversy concerning the antiquity and historical value of the Runic character and inscriptions ran high in the latter half of the seventeenth century, and unjustifiable means were used to establish opinions as facts. This fragment of ancient Runic writing on parchment was ascribed by Rudbeck to the seventh century, by Stiernman to the tenth, by Biorner to the eleventh or twelfth. It was incorporated into Hicks's *Thesaurus* as a specimen of written Runic. But Archbishop Benzelius, Celsius the elder and Celsius the younger, Erichson, and Ihre, antiquaries of great note and authority in Sweden, expressed their doubts of the authenticity of this fragment at the time it appeared, —about 1690; and Nardin, in an *Academical Dissertation*, published at Upsala 1774, proves from the language that this Runic manuscript is an impudent forgery.\*

\* The earliest runes were not writing in proper sense, but fanciful signs, possessing a magical power; such runes have, through vulgar supersti-

tion, been handed down even to the present time. The phrase in the old Danish Ballads, *kaste runer*, "to throw runes," i.e., chips, may be compared to the *Lat. sortes*, Mommsen's History of Rome, vol. i. p. 187, footnote (Eng. Ed.), or the Sibylline leaves in the *Æneid*. In regard to runes in writing, the word was first applied to the original alphabet, which at an early time was derived from the common Phœnician, probably through Greek and Roman coins, in the first centuries of our era. From these runes were subsequently formed two alphabets, the old Scandinavian (whence again the Anglo-Saxon) as found on the golden horn and the stone in Tune, and the later Scandinavian, in which the inscriptions in the greater number of the Swedish and Danish stone monuments are written, most being of the tenth (ninth?) and following centuries. A curious instance of the employment of runes is their being written on a *kefli* (a round piece of wood) as messages. It is doubtful whether poems were ever written in this way, for almost the only authority for such a statement is Egla, 605, where we read that the Sonatorrek was taken down on a Runic stick, the other instances being mostly from romances or fabulous sagas. This writing on *kefli* is mentioned in the Latin line, "Barbara 'fraxineis' sculpatur runa 'tabellis'" (Capella, fifth century). In later times (from the thirteenth century) Runic writing was practised as a sort of curiosity. Thus calendars used to be written on sticks, of which there is a specimen in the Bodleian Library in Oxford; they were also used for inscriptions on tombstones, spoons, chairs, and the like. There even exists in the Arna-Magn. Library a Runic MS. of an old Danish law, and there is a Runic letter in Sturl. (1241).—G. Vigfusson in Cleasby's Icelandic-English Dictionary, *sub voce*. An abbreviated quotation by A.

Recent authors to be consulted in regard to the runes are :—

Bugge, Soph., Om Runeskriftens Oprindelse. Christiania, 1873.

Wimmer, Ludv., Runeskriftens Oprindelse og Udvikling i Norden. Copenhagen, 1874.

Stephens, Geo., The Old-Northern Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England, now first collected and deciphered, by Geo. Stephens; with many hundreds of fac-similes and illustrations. 3 vols. London, 1866, and later.

Thorsen, P. G., Om Runernes Brug til Skrift udenfor det monumentale. Copenhagen, 1877.

## CHAPTER II.

## OF THE RELIGION OF THE NORTHMEN.

It must strike every reader of saga literature how very little we can gather from the sagas of the doctrines and usages of the paganism which existed among the Northmen down to a comparatively late period, and for five hundred years after the cognate Anglo-Saxon branch, both on the Continent and in England, had been entirely Christianised, and had been long under the full influence of the Church and priesthood. The Anglo-Saxons landed in England about the year 450. They appear at that time to have had a religion cognate to, if not identical with, that of the Northmen who landed in England three hundred years afterwards, or about the year 787. Odin, Thor, Frigg, were among their deities; Yule and Easter were religious festivals; and the eating of horse-flesh was prohibited in a council held in Mercia in 785, as "not done by Christians in the East"—which implies that among the Anglo-Saxons also it was a pagan custom, derived from their ancestors. In about a century after the landing of the Saxons, viz., about 550, the Heptarchy was in existence; and in about another century, viz., about 640, Christianity was generally established among

them. It was not till a century after their first expeditions, about 787, that the pagan Northmen made a complete and permanent conquest of the kingdom of Northumberland, which they held under independent Danish princes until 953, when independent earls, only nominally subject to the English crown, succeeded; and even at the compilation of Domesday Book by William the Conqueror, the lands of Northumberland, Westmoreland, Cumberland, and part of Lancashire, are omitted, as not belonging to England. Of these Anglo-Northmen the conversion cannot well be fixed to a date, because they had no scruple apparently of nominally adopting Christianity when it suited their interests; and they appear to have had no desire to convert, or to be converted, in their predatory expeditions. As late, however, as the beginning of the eleventh century, the Northmen and their chiefs were still pagans. Svein, indeed, and his son Canute, who in 1017 became sole monarch of England, were zealous Christians; but they and their contemporaries, Olaf Trygvesson and Olaf the Saint, and the small kings in Norway, were born pagans; and their conversion, and the introduction of the Christian religion and religious institutions into Norway and its dependencies, cannot be dated higher than the first half of the eleventh century. It seems surprising that we know so little of a pagan religion existing so near our times,—of this last remnant of paganism among the European people, existing in vigour almost five hundred years after Christianity and the Romish

Church establishment were diffused in every other country! What we know of it is from the Edda compiled by Sæmund\* the priest, a contemporary of Are who compiled the historical sagas. Sæmund was born in 1056, and had travelled and studied in Germany and France. He lived consequently in an age when many who had been bred in and understood the religion of their forefathers were still living, and in a country in which, if anywhere, its original doctrines and institutions would be preserved in purity.

If we may take the account of Tacitus as correct, this ancient religion of the Germanic race must have been eminently spiritual, and free from idolatry. He says, in chapter 35, "*De Moribus Germanorum*," that they held "*regnator omnium Deus, cetera subjecta atque parentia;*" and, in chapter 9, "*ceterum nec cohibere parietibus Deos, neque in ullam humani oris speciem assimilare ex magnitudine cœlestium arbitrantur.*" The polytheism of the ancient Romans, and the saint-worship of the Christian Church of Rome, and probably the infirmity of the human mind and language requiring, in an uncultivated state, material forms to represent abstract ideas, had in the course of ten centuries, between Tacitus and Sæmund, undoubtedly mingled with and moulded the forms and ideas of the original religion of this race. Idolatry, in every shape and country, is the result of a struggle of the human mind to attain

\* Sæmund's name became connected with the elder Edda after the revival of Icelandic literature, but this theory is not supported by a scrap of evidence, and is now abandoned by all eminent Old-Norse scholars.

fixed ideas in religion. It is universal at a certain stage of the development of the intellectual powers of man, because that stage is as necessary to be passed through as infancy in the individual, or barbarism in a society of human beings. A love for religious certainty and truth is at the bottom even of the grossest idolatry, if we analyse it rightly. Idolatry is an attempt to individualise the conception of almighty power, under a strong sense of its existence—to make it more possible, or more easy for the mind, in a certain stage of development, to dwell upon and entertain some present conception of that power. Idols should be considered by the Christian philosopher as the imperfect words of a much more pure religious sentiment than our churchmen generally suppose—words different, indeed, from spoken or written words, but intended to convey the same conception, and used with the same sentiment by the ignorant idolater as the most poetic imagery and most eloquent language of our pulpit orator. The most absurd idols of the Hindu or the South Sea islander, sent home to the museum of the Missionary Society as memorials of the spiritual blindness of the heathens at this day—idols with four or five arms and wings, griffin-footed, made up, in short, of emblems of all real or imaginary living beings known to the ignorant idolater,—are in reality words of which these absurdly combined parts are the syllables, or rather are the expression of a sentiment of which these are the words. We smile or shudder in holy horror at these uncouth representations, forgetting,



in the pride of our philosophy and theology, that the sentiment is the same—viz., the innate feeling of divine power; and perhaps not less intensely felt in the mind which expresses it in these shapes, than in the mind which expresses it in the shapes of written or spoken language. It is but the way of expressing it, not what is intended to be expressed, that is different. Idol-language and word-language have the same object—namely, to express the impression or sentiment of almighty power and divine existence innate in the human mind; and who shall say that we approach nearer to the understanding and expressing of this almighty power and divine nature, “which passeth understanding,” with our alphabet, or written or spoken words, than the ignorant idolater, without words in his language to express his ideas, in his carved and painted idol-language? Each means may be the best adapted for different states and stages of the development of the human mind. It has a stage in its development at which, in a highly civilised country, a little black stroke with a dot over it presents to the philosopher, and as he believes, in the most clear and distinct manner, all that mind knows or can express of self-existence, of individuality—of I. A wooden idol, representing something like to but different from man, presents to the mind of the pagan all that it can conceive, or with its means express, of superhuman divine existence. Is not this a mere defect in the alphabet used? Is not the real inward sentiment in the mind of man, with regard to the

Divinity, the same, precisely the same, whatever be the mode of expressing it? But the pagan, the idolater, the ignorant even of the Catholic church, worship these stocks and stones; and instead of regarding them as signs only shadowing forth what, in its intellectual state, the human mind cannot otherwise express of its religious sentiments, take the signs for the things they represent, and worship them as such. So do we, in all our pride of knowledge and intellectual development. We too worship our signs—our words. Let any man set himself to the task of examining the state of his knowledge on the most important subjects, divine or human, and he will find himself a mere word-worshipper; he will find words without ideas or meaning in his mind venerated, made idols of—idols different from those carved in wood or stone only by being stamped with printers' ink on white paper. This is perhaps the just view which the philosopher and the humble Christian should take, of all the natural forms of religion which have ever existed beyond the pale of the religion revealed to us in the Scriptures.

This necessity of man's expressing in his uncultivated mental condition, by the material visible means of idols, the innate sentiment of religion which he has no other language for, will, if it do not reconcile, render very unimportant the various speculations of antiquaries relative to Odin. Some find that Odin was a real personage, who, on the fall of Mithridates, migrated with his nation from the

borders of the Tanais, to escape the Roman yoke, about seventy years before our era. This is the opinion of Snorre Sturlason; and, as far as regards the Asiatic origin of the Northmen, it is confirmed by all the traditions, mythological or historical, of the skalds. Torfæus, reckoning from skaldic genealogies, finds that there must have been an older Odin; and if we are to admit that the god called Odin was a real historical personage, it is impossible to fix, from the traditionary genealogies of those who claimed to be his descendants, at what period he lived. There are no fixed points in the history of the North before the middle of the ninth century, when, about 853 or 854, the birth of Harald Harfager, who lived to 931, is determined from contemporary history. The skaldic genealogies make this king the twenty-eighth in descent from Odin. If we allow eleven years to each reign, which is the average length of the reigns in the Heptarchy, we must place Odin 550 years after the Christian era. If we take Sir Isaac Newton's computation of eighteen years as the average length of reigns, we bring Odin to the year 368 of our era. If we take lives instead of reigns, we must believe twenty-seven successive persons to have lived so long as to average thirty-five years each, in order to place this god called Odin seventy years before our era. When we turn to the Anglo-Saxon genealogies, we find it still more difficult to place Odin. King Alfred was born 849, or about four years before Harald Harfager, and is only twenty-three gene-

rations from the Odin or Wodin of Hengist and Horsa. Offa, king of Mercia, who lived about 793, is only fifteen generations; Ida, king of Northumberland, who lived about 547, only nine generations; and Ella, king of Northumberland, who lived about 559, is eleven generations from Odin or Wodin. The reasonable view is that of Pinkerton, which has more recently been developed by Grimm and other German writers on Scandinavian mythology,—that Odin, Wodin, Godin, were names of the Supreme Divine Power among the Germanic race; and that Thor, Frigg, &c., were merely impersonations of divine attributes; that none of these were ever human heroes, deified by their contemporaries or descendants. It may, indeed, be reasonably doubted whether, in any age or country, any such deification of mortals known to be human beings—any such hero-worship as classical schoolmen and antiquaries suppose, ever did take place among any portion of the human race; for it is contrary to the natural tendency and movement of the human mind. It is a trite observation, that no people have ever been discovered by the traveller in so rude and barbarous a state as to be without any sentiment of a Divinity; and that this universal sentiment is more distinctive of the species man even than his reasoning powers,—for in these the elephant, the dog, the beaver, the bee, partake, and almost vie with human beings in the lowest condition of humanity. The writers who make the most of this trite observation in support of natural religion

overlook a powerful argument for the truth of revealed religion, in a sentiment equally innate, and as widely diffused among men in a natural state. No people have ever been discovered by the traveller or the antiquary without a strong and distinct impression of the incarnation, past, present, or to come, as well as the existence, of the Divinity. Our divines turn away from this argument in support of revealed religion. They assume that, in the dark ages of every nation, individuals have taken to themselves the attributes and honours of divinity—have imposed themselves upon their contemporaries as gods, or have been taken by their contemporaries or their posterity for gods; and in this schoolboy way great divines, historians, and philosophers think of, tell of, and account for, idolatry and paganism among rude uncivilised nations. But they do not apply to the subject two universally and permanently ruling principles of the human mind in every stage of development: first, that there is no deceiving a man's own consciousness; and, second, that if a man cannot deceive himself, he cannot deceive others. Alexander the Great, or Odin, or the Roman emperors, or the Roman pontiffs, may have placed themselves at the head of the priesthood or church, and may have allowed their flatterers to place their statues among those of the gods, and to append the title of Divus or Saint to their names; but in all this Church trickery these men no more believed themselves gods, than their people believed them to be of divine nature. The human mind, in a state

of sanity, never was discovered in so low a condition of the reasoning power as to approach to any such conclusions. As to a rude and ignorant people elevating their deceased leaders, kings, heroes, to a place among their deities, it is the last thing a rude and ignorant people would think of; for in a rude and ignorant state the natural movement of the human mind is to detract from, not to elevate, the merits of others; and the valued endowments of body or mind in such a state—strength, beauty, valour, or even wisdom in the narrow range of their public or private affairs—are more generally diffused than the intellectual attainments valued by men in a civilised state, and are neither so high nor so rare as to be deified, instead of being subjects of envy and detraction, or of emulation. In no state, barbarous or civilised, are men disposed to yield superiority, and allow divine honours and attributes to mortals who, as natural self-love or vanity will whisper to every one, are not much superior,—not divinely superior, to themselves. The natural movement and tendency of the human mind are equally opposed in every stage of development, in every state of society, to any such hero-worship. Divines overlook the weight of this argument for revealed religion drawn from natural religion—that it is not from man upwards, but from the Divinity downwards, that this universal sentiment of an incarnation proceeds; that the existence of a Supreme Being is not a sentiment more innate in the human mind, than that of the incarnation of the Supreme Being

at some period, past, present, or future; that it is not Jupiter, Mars, or Odin, who were men or heroes set up by their fellow-men as gods to be worshipped, but that it is the innate and universal sentiment of the human mind which has set them up. What the mind cannot grasp in one conception, or express in one expression, it necessarily divides; and thus groups of divine attributes have been impersonated as distinct deities, individualised, named, incarnated, by an irresistible instinct to find an incarnation of Divine Power; and these distinct individualisations produced in a rude state of the human mind by the poverty of language, have been made historical personages of. But, looking at the natural movement of the human mind, it may be reasonably doubted whether any historical personage, who really lived as a mortal man, was ever made a god of by his fellow-men. The Christian philosopher, who considers the expected Messiah of the Jews, the incarnation of Jupiter, of Odin, and the living incarnation of a Lama among a great proportion of the present population of Asia, will not hesitate to place the accomplished advent of our Saviour upon the same innate sentiment of the human mind as the existence itself of Supreme Divine Power. Both are universal innate sentiments of the mind of man. The divines and Christian philosophers who are not content with resting the existence of a Supreme Divine Power upon the innate sentiment of the human mind, upon the same ground as the proof of our self-existence rests, but who seek to prove the

existence of a Supreme Divine Power from the design, contrivance, and wisdom manifested in the material objects around us,—Paley, and the Bridgewater Bequest writers, who undertook, for a prize of two or three hundred pounds given by an English lord, to prove to all and sundry of God's creatures the existence of a God from the mechanism of the hand, the eye, the movements of the planetary bodies, and other natural objects without us, and not from that which is within us,—who seek to prove the spiritual from the material, and not from the spirituality existing and innate in every man's mind,—are not so immeasurably distant from gross paganism as they suppose. They and the pagan,—the Odin-worshipper, or Jupiter-worshipper, or whatever he may be,—proceed upon the very same material grounds, and the pagan appears the closer and stricter reasoner of the two. An ignorant and barbarous people may be wrong in the grounds from which they reason, but are seldom wrong in the reasoning process itself. Their conclusions are usually very correct, only drawn from false premises. They mark the thunderbolt, and conclude there is a Supreme Divine Cause—a thunder-maker. They mark the ocean,—now calm and smiling, now shaking the earth with its fury,—and conclude there must be an ocean god. This is precisely the reasoning of the Paley and of the Bridgewater Bequest philosophy. The manifest design, contrivance, adaptation of means to an end in a watch, prove the existence of a watch-maker—of the hand, of a hand-



maker—of the eye, of an eye-maker—of the world, of a world-maker. But from these material-world grounds these material philosophers cannot deduce, in strict reasoning, the unity of the Supreme Divine Power; still less the moral perfections of the Supreme Divine Power. The pagan proceeds upon exactly the same grounds in his religious belief; but reasons much more correctly and logically from the same material grounds, when he concludes there is a separate Divine Power for each separate class of material objects—a god of thunder, a Neptune, and so on; and concludes, from the material world grounds, that the superiority of the intelligence that made it, above his which perceives it, is in degree and power, not in kind; and his material-world grounds give him no reason, in his strict reasoning process, to conclude that the divine intelligence, or intelligences, which he deduces from them, are exempt from the passions or frailties of the intelligences he is acquainted with. He attributes, therefore, to his gods, the passions and motives of men; and the Christian philosophers, who reason from the same grounds to prove the existence of the Deity, do not reason half so correctly as the pagan; for these grounds will carry human reason no farther than the pagan goes,—and there Paley, prize-essay divinity, and paganism stick together neck and neck. The material-world grounds prove the existence only of creative power. The goodness, mercy, omniscience, all the attributes of God, are in the innate sentiment of the human mind of an

existence of Supreme Divine Power; and upon this innate sentiment or spirituality the material-world argument has to fall back, to rescue itself from mere paganism. The distinctive characteristics of paganism and Christianity are, that the former rests entirely on material-world grounds—and from these grounds reasons strictly and correctly, its conclusions being correctly drawn, but from imperfect premises; the latter rests on the spiritual evidence of the innate sentiment of a Divine Existence, of which every human mind is as conscious as of its own existence—and on Revelation. Paley, the Bridgewater Bequest philosophers, and all that school of Christian reasoners, have, in fact, done infinite mischief to religion, by throwing out of view the innate sense, the spirituality of the human mind, on which pure religion is founded; and by resting its evidences on material external objects, from which the deist, the polytheist, the Odin-worshipper, if such now existed, might draw conclusions in their own favour more strictly logical than this kind of Christian reasoner can; for divine power, and no other of the attributes of the Deity, can be deduced from the material world without a reference to the intellectual, to the human mind, and to the inspired writings. These philosophers have lowered the tone of religion by their evidences drawn from the material world; and their evidences do not, in strict reasoning, prove their conclusions.

Of the doctrine, institutions, and forms of the religion of Odin, we have but few memorials.

There are two Eddas. The older Edda is that which was composed or compiled by Sæmund,\* and of it only three fragments are extant.† The one is called the "Voluspa," or the Prophecy of the Vala. In the Scotch words "spæ-wife," and in the English word "spy," we retain words derived from the same root, and with the same meaning, as the word "spa" of the Voluspa. The second fragment is called "Havamal," or the High Discourse; the third is the Magic, or Song of Odin. The Voluspa gives an account by the prophetess of the actions and operations of the gods; a description of chaos; of the formation of the world; of giants, men, dwarfs; of a final conflagration and dissolution of all things; and of the future happiness of the good, and punishment of the wicked. The Havamal is a collection of moral and economical precepts. The Song of Odin is a collection of stanzas in celebration of his magic powers. The younger Edda, composed 120 years after the older, by Snorre Sturlason, is a commentary upon the Voluspa; illustrating it in a dialogue between Gylfe, the supposed contemporary of Odin, under the assumed name of Ganglere, and three divinities,—Har (the High), Jafnhar (equal to the High), and Thride (the Third)—at Asgard (the abode of the gods, or the original Asiatic seat of Odin), to which Gylfe had gone

\* See note, page 88.

† There are thirty-nine poems in the elder Edda. They are in no special connection with each other, but may be divided into three classes: purely mythological, mythological-didactic, and mythological-historical. At least twenty of them may be classed as mythological. See Anderson's "Norse Mythology," pp. 116-125.

to ascertain the cause of the superiority of the Asiatics. Both the Eddas appear to have been composed as handbooks to assist in understanding the names of the gods, and the allusions to them in the poetry of the skalds; not to illustrate the doctrine of the religion of Odin. The absurd and the rational are consequently mingled. Many sublime conceptions, and many apparently borrowed by Sæmund and Snorre from Christianity,—as, for instance, the Trinity with which Ganglere converses,—are mixed with fictions almost as puerile as those of the classical mythology. The genius of Snorre Sturlason shines even in these fables. In the grave humour with which the most extravagantly gigantic feats of Thor at Utgard are related and explained, Swift himself is not more happy; and one would almost believe that Swift had the adventures of Thor and the giant Utgard-Loke before him when he wrote of Brobdignac. The practical forms or modes of worship in the religion of Odin are not to be discovered from the Eddas, nor from the sagas which the two Eddas were intended to illustrate. It is probable that much has been altered to suit the ideas of the age in which they were committed to writing, and of the scribes who compiled them. Christianity in Scandinavia seems, in the eleventh century, to have consisted merely in the ceremony of baptism, without any instruction in its doctrines. The wholesale conversion of whole districts by Olaf Trygvesson, and King Olaf the Saint, was evidently the mere ceremony of baptism. On the eve of the

battle of Stiklestad the mere acceptance and performance of that ceremony, without any instruction, was considered by Saint Olaf himself a sufficient Christianising of the pagan robbers, whose assistance he refused unless they would consent to be Christians. From the high importance attached to the mere ceremony without reference to its meaning, it is not improbable that the Christian transcribers, or relaters of the historical sagas, may have thought it decent to make the ancestors of the kings or great personages they are treating of, although they had lived in pagan times, partake of the important Christian ceremony which of itself had, in the rude conception of the early Christian converts, a saving power; for we find on the birth of every child who is to become a king, and leave descendants, that "water was poured over the child, and a name given him;" that he was baptized, in short, although living in the Odin religion. Harald Harfager is stated in his saga "to have had water poured over him, and a name given him," and his son Hakon also, who succeeded him; but we hear nothing of any such baptism of Eirik Blood-axe, or of any other of his sons, nor of any whose descendants did not succeed to power as kings. It may reasonably be doubted if any such ceremony was used in the Odin religion on the birth of a child; \* because these pagans certainly exposed their children—a practice not consistent with 'dedi-

\* Dr. Konrad Maurer has shown conclusively that the sprinkling of the infant with water was a pre-Christian ceremony among the Norsemen, and also that it prevailed among the pagan Romans and Greeks.

cating, them by a ceremony analogous to baptism to the service of their gods in any way; and if it had no meaning in their religion, it could not be practised, unless in imitation of the Christian ceremony. Marriage also appears not to have been celebrated with any religious form. Polygamy was as fully tolerated as in Asia.\* Harald Harfager had nine wives, with several concubines. Saint Olaf had concubines besides his wife, and was succeeded by a natural son; for illegitimacy, where it is not founded on any religious element in the marriage tie, is not considered a natural or just disqualification from inheritance. Marriage appears with the Odin-worshippers to have been altogether a civil tie, subject, consequently, to the disruptions which civil circumstances might produce or excuse.

The churches or temples of Odin appear to have had no consecrated order of men like a priesthood set apart for administering in religious rites. In the historical sagas, in the accounts of the direct collisions between Hakon Athelstan's foster-son, or Olaf the Saint, with the worshippers of Odin, in the temples at More, and in Gudbrandsdal, no mention is made of the presence of any priests. Bondes of eminence, great people, and even district kings, are mutilated or put to death—suffer martyrdom in the cause of Odinism; but no word is there to be found of any man in sacerdotal function. Three great religious festivals appear to have been held by the

\* A too broad statement. Polygamy was very rare among our heathen ancestors.

Odin worshippers. One, in honour of Thor, was held in midwinter, about the turn of the day; and from coinciding nearly with the Christmas of the Christian church, the name of Yule, derived from Jolner, one of Odin's names, and the festivity and merry-making of the pagan celebration, were amalgamated with the Christian commemoration. The second, in honour of Frigg, was held at the first quarter of the second moon after the beginning of the year;\* and the third, in honour of Odin, in the beginning of spring. The convenience of having snow to travel on, and the leisure and facility of travelling while snow covered the ground, have probably been the cause of all these pagan festivals being crowded together in the winter half-year, or between harvest and seed-time. They were not solely nor principally religious festivals, but assemblies of the people at which the regular Things were held, business transacted, and fairs kept for bartering, and buying, and merry-making. An hereditary priesthood descended from the twelve diar, or priests, or godar, who accompanied Odin from Asia, and who originally were judges as well as priests in the Things held at these great religious festivals, existed at the colonisation of Iceland, and down to the time of Snorre Sturlason himself, who was one of those godars; but the sacerdotal function had become merged in the civil function of judge apparently long before the introduction of Chris-

\* The Northmen appear to have reckoned by winters, and the beginning of the year or winter from the 16th of October.—L.

tianity. The judicial functions and emoluments of judge descending by hereditary rights in certain families, as appertaining to their hereditary priesthood, could not be a popular institution, especially with no sacerdotal function to perform. True religion, as we see in Scotland and England, can scarcely maintain itself when it mixes up civil power or great wealth with the religious element in its establishment; and much less can a false religion. We may gather from the silence of the sagas on the point, that the godar had no sacerdotal or religious function in society; and did not, even in the earliest historical period, exist as priests, but as hereditary local judges only, each in his own godard or parish. At the Things at which Hakon Athelstan's foster-son, Olaf Trygvesson, and Olaf the Saint, come in collision with the religion of Odin, and threaten and even put to death peasants and chiefs who adhere to Odinism, no priests or godar appear, or are spoken of. Their civil power, jurisdiction, and dues or emoluments, however, were derived from their hereditary succession to the priestly office in their respective godards; and it is not unreasonable to suppose that they, their supporters, and the religion on which they founded their rights, were not the popular side at the introduction of Christianity. Some indications may be perceived of its having been a political movement, to adopt Christianity. The supporters of the old religion appear to have been the small kings, the rich bondes, and those who may reasonably be supposed to have been them-



selves godar, or connected with them. The support of Christianity, on the other hand, appears to have come from the people and the kings, and not from the kings alone. In Iceland, where the godar, with their civil powers, were transplanted from Norway by the first aristocratical settlers, and where Christianity had no royal supporters, the Thing of the people declared Christianity the lawful religion of the land. The institutions of Odinism, as well as its doctrines, were evidently become extinct as religion. The incompatible elements of civil power, wealth, and sacerdotal function, had lost all religious influence. The mixture is at this day as ineffective in its power over the human mind as it was in the eleventh century, and in the Christian religion as it was in Odinism.

The only practices connected with religion mentioned in the sagas, at which a priesthood may have officiated, are sacrifices, at the three great festivals, of cattle, which were killed and feasted upon. The door-post, floor, and people are stated to have been sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice by a brush; but even this may be a fiction of the saga-maker, taken from the similar sprinkling of holy water by a brush in the Romish church. The best established of the religious practices of the Odin worshippers was the partaking of horse-flesh at those festivals, as commemorative of their ancestors. This practice was transplanted even to Iceland by the pagan settlers, and it held its ground there long after Christianity was adopted. As food, the horse never

could have been reared in Iceland; and a religious or popular superstition only must have kept up such a custom there. The eating of horse-flesh at those festivals appears to have been held as decisive a test of paganism as baptism of Christianity, and was punished by death in the eleventh century by Saint Olaf. Public business, however, in the Things, and the ordinary business and pleasures of great country fairs, appear to have occupied the people at those festivals much more than any religious observances. Public worship under any form, ~~or private or household~~ devotion in the Odin religion, cannot be distinctly traced in the sagas. It is to be remembered, however, that it might not have been thought right or safe by the saga-relater or saga-scribe to go far into an account of pagan observances, customs, or doctrines; in case of being considered himself as a believer in them. This may have affected considerably the fidelity of delivery of subjects, both religious and political, in the sagas, when they were still in a traditionary, not a written state. To some cause of this kind we must ascribe the trifling amount of information concerning the Odin-worship to be found in the sagas. Religion may have been very little regarded, and a priesthood to support its observances and doctrines may have become a class connected only with civil power and emolument in their godards, and not thought of as belonging to religious service; but still a very strong religious spirit, among some at least of the pagan population, may be inferred from various details in the sagas.

We read of many individuals in the reigns of Hakon Athelstan's foster-son, of Olaf Trygvesson, and of Olaf the Saint, suffering the loss of fortune, mutilation, torture, and death, rather than give up their religion and submit to baptism. The religion of Odin had its martyrs in those days, and consequently must have had its doctrines, its devotions, its observances, its application to the mind of man in some way, its something to suffer for; but the sagas leave us in the dark with regard to the doctrines and observances of a religion for which men were willing to suffer. The machinery of the Odin mythology, the fables, allegories, meanings and no-meanings of the Myths, however interesting, give us little or no information on the really important points,—the amount, quality, and social influence of the religion of the pagan Northmen immediately previous to their conversion to Christianity. The many names of places derived from Thor, and other names given to the Supreme Being in their religion, which are still to be recognised, not only in Scandinavia, but in the north of Scotland, the Farey Islands, Iceland, show that the Northmen carried about with them some knowledge of their religion. The many allusions in the poems and songs of the skalds presuppose even a very intimate knowledge, on the part of the hearers, with a very complicated mythological nomenclature and system. Every one, from the lowest to the highest, must have been familiar with the names, functions, attributes, histories ascribed to these gods, or the skald would have

been unintelligible. The great development of the intellectual powers among the Northmen, is indeed one of the most curious inferences to be drawn from the sagas. The descriptions of relative situations of countries, as East, West, North, or South, show generalised ideas and habits of thinking among their seafaring men; and the songs of the skalds, as those of the four who accompanied Saint Olaf at the battle of Stiklestad, seem to have been instantly seized and got by heart by the people, — the Biarkemal to have been instantly recognised, and thought applicable to their situation; and all the mythological, and to us obscure allusions, to have been understood generally in the halls in which the skalds recited or sung their compositions. Their religion must have been taught to them, although we find few traces of the religious establishment or social arrangements by which this was done.

The material remains of this religion of Odin are surprisingly few. We find in the North very few remains of temples; — no statues, emblems, images, symbols. Was it actually more spiritual than other systems of paganism, and therefore less material in its outward expression? If we consider the vast mounds raised in memory of the dead, and their high appreciation of their great men of former ages, we can scarcely doubt but that the Northmen had higher notions of a future state than that of drinking ale in Valhal.

The temples of Odin appear to have been but thinly scattered. We hear but of the one at More,

and one at Lade, in the Throndhjem district. A mound of earth alone remains at More, which was the principal temple in the north of Norway: houses or halls, constructed of wood, for receiving the people who came together to eat, drink, and transact their business, have probably been all the structures. The temple at Upsala, or Uppsalir (the up-halls or great halls), should have left some traces of former magnificence; for it was the residence of Odin himself,—the headquarters, the Rome of the Odin religion; and in part, at least, was constructed of stone. Adam of Bremen, who lived about the time Christianity was first introduced into Sweden, namely, about 1064, says, "*Nobilissimum illa gens templum habet quod Upsala dicitur, non longe positum a Sictona civitate vel Birka. In hoc templo, quod totum ex auro paratum est, statua trium deorum veneratur populus, ita ut potentissimus eorum Thor in medio solum habeat triclinium, hinc et inde locum possident Woden et Fricco.*" In this passage from a contemporary Christian writer, who, as canon in the cathedral of Bremen,—under the bishop of which all the northern bishops stood at first,—must have had the best opportunity of becoming acquainted with the paganism of the North, Thor is stated to be seated on the throne as the supreme deity, and Odin and Frigg on each side as the minor deities in this pagan trinity; and the temple is stated to have been most noble, and adorned with gold. This temple was converted into a Christian church by Olaf the Swede

about 1026; and Severin, an Englishman, was the first bishop. It was plundered of all its wealth, pagan and Christian, by King Stenkil, the son of King Ingve, about the year 1085; and set fire to, and the stone walls only left. King Sverker I. restored it about 1139, and had it consecrated, and dedicated to Saint Laurence. This church appears to be the only building from which the extent at least, if not the magnificence, of the temples of the pagan religion of the North may be guessed at. It stands at Gamle Upsala (Old Upsala), about two miles north of the present town of Upsala, at the end of an extensive plain. Around Gamle Upsala—now consisting of this church, the minister's house, and two or three cottages—there are, according to Professor Verelius, in his notes on the Herverar Saga, tumuli to the number of six hundred and sixty-nine, besides many which have been levelled for cultivation. Reckoning the chain of such hillocks between the town of Upsala and Gamle Upsala, that, or even a greater number of those tumuli, may be conceded to the antiquary. Three of them, close to Gamle Upsala, are called Kongs-högarne (the king's mounds); and one, oblong and flattened at the top, is Tings-högen (the Thing's mound). The circumference of these mounds at the base is about three hundred and fifty paces, and the ascent on any side takes about seventy-five steps; so that the perpendicular height may be about ninety feet. It may also be conceded to the antiquary that these mounds are works of art, in

so far that they have been reduced to regular shape by the hands of man, and have been used as places of interment, and still more as places for addressing a multitude from—the steep slopes close to each other admitting of great numbers sitting or standing within sight and hearing of a person addressing them. But whoever looks over this chain of sand-hills at the end of a plain which has been a lake or mire at no distant geological period, and with a mire or morass, now called Myrby Trask, on the other side of it, will doubt whether these mounds be not originally of natural formation. He is struck, at least, with the conviction that not only in other countries, but in Sweden itself in particular, such formations of small ridges, and hillocks of gravel, sand, and rolled stones, upon a tongue of land which has originally divided two lakes, are of most frequent occurrence. Here, about Upsala, man has availed himself of a chain of mounds formed by nature; and, as a natural feature of ground, they account for the selection of Gamle Upsala in the earliest ages for the seat of government. With a lake or mire on each side, a narrow tongue of land dotted with small eminences behind each other gave the defenders a succession of strong posts to retire upon; and when missiles of very short range, and spear, sword, or battle-axe, and fighting hand to hand, were the only weapons and modes of fighting, the advantage of the higher ground was the great object in tactics. Gamle Upsala would be strong when the country was covered with wood,

and the flat ground was a flooded morass. Of the old buildings, or town, no vestiges remain. Of the temple some of the walls are supposed to be included in the present church; and the old foundations have been traced by Rudbeck and Peringskiöld. Its extreme length has not exceeded one hundred and twenty feet; and the rough unhewn small stones of such walls as may possibly have been parts of the old structure do not tell of much architectural magnificence. The arches, whether of the pagan structure, or of the re-edification in 1139, are the round Saxon arch; and the whole is less than an ordinary parish church in England. An exterior line is said by antiquaries to have surrounded the building, and to have been the golden ring, chain, or serpent surrounding the temple of Odin in skaldic poetry; but this has had no foundation but in their fancy. A wooden palisade may, no doubt, have surrounded the temple, with the tops of it painted or gilded; for the Northmen appear to have been profuse in gilding, from the descriptions of their war vessels with gilded sides and prows; and the skalds, in their symbolical inflated language, may have called this the serpent or dragon of Thor: but wood-work leaves no trace to posterity, and of stone-work no mark remains of any exterior circumvallation; and it must be confessed that no trace remains in this locality of magnificence belonging to the paganism of the North. The gold chains, bracelets, armlets, anklets—too small for men, and of exquisite workmanship—which have been found in the North,



and are preserved in the museums of Copenhagen, Christiania, and Stockholm, if they really belonged to northern idols, and were not rather the hoarded plunder of vikings gathered in more civilised or refined lands,\* or of Varings returned from Constantinople, give a much higher idea of the splendour of the pagan religion of Odin than any architectural remains in Scandinavia. The sites of Sigtuna and of Birka—now Old Sigtuna, mentioned by Adam of Bremen in the above extract—are at the head of the Malar lake, and would well deserve the careful examination of the antiquarian traveller. Walls are still standing there which have at least the interest of being among the oldest architectural fragments of the North.

The most permanent remains of the Odin religion are to be found in the usages and language of the descendants of the Odin-worshippers. All the descendants of the great Saxon race retain the names of three days of the week—Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday—from the Odin religion. Tuesday, perhaps, or Diss-day, on which the offerings to fate were made, and the courts of justice held, may belong also to the number.† Yule is a pagan festival kept in the pagan way, with merriment and good cheer, all over the Saxon world. Beltan is kept on Midsummer-day, all over the north of Europe, by lighting fires on the hills, and other festivities. It is but within these

\* The archæological relics are so numerous in Scandinavia as to wholly exclude the idea of their importation in any manner from foreign lands.

† Tuesday is named after Tir, the one-handed god.

fifty years that trolls or sea-trows, and finmen and dwarfs, disappeared in the northern parts of Scotland. Mara (the nightmare) still rides the modern Saxon in his sleep, and under the same name nearly as she did the Yngling king Vanland; and the evil one in the Odin mythology, Nokken, keeps his ground, in the speech and invocations of our common people, as Old Nick, in spite of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian Knowledge. It is curious to observe how much more enduring ideas are than things—the intellectual than the material objects that mark the existence of the human species. Stone-work, and gold, and statues, and all material remains of this once general religion of the North, have disappeared from the face of the earth; yet words and ideas belonging to it remain.

It is remarkable that in the religion of Odin, as in that of Mahomet, women appear to have had no part in the future life.\* We find no allusion to any Valhal for the female virtues. The Paradise of Mahomet and the Valhal of Odin are the same; only the one offers sensual and the other warlike enjoyments to the happy. They both exclude females. This is not the only coincidence. Odin appears to have stood in the same relation to Thor in Odinism that Mahomet stands in to the Supreme Being in Mahometanism. The family of Mahomet, its semi-sacred character, and its rights, as successors to the prophet, to the throne and

\* This is a mistake. The mythology teaches that Odin shared the slain equally with Freyja, who rules in *Folkvang*, that is, in the human dwellings, where there are seats enough for all.

supremacy of temporal power over Mahometans, and with equal rights of succession in equal degrees of affinity to this sacred source, is in fact the Yngling dynasty of Odinism. If Mahomet had existed 400 years earlier, he would have been in modern history one of the Odins, perhaps *the* Odin, and the person or persons we call Odin would have merged in him. The coincidence between Odinism and Mahometanism in the ideas of a future state, in the exclusion of females from it, in the hereditary succession of a family to sacred and temporal power and function, show a coincidence in the ideas and elements of society among the people among whom the two religions flourished; and this coincidence is perhaps sufficiently strong to prove that the religion of Odin must have sprung up originally in the East among the same ideas and social elements as Mahometanism. The rapid conquest by Christianity over Odinism, about the beginning of the eleventh century, proves that the latter was not indigenous, but imported, and belonged to different physical circumstances and a different social state. The exclusion of females from a future life, and their virtues from reward, was not suited to the physical circumstances under which men live in the North, although among a people living on horseback in the plains of Asia the female may hold no higher social estimation than the horse. Christianity, by including the female sex in its benefits, could not but prevail in the North over Odinism.

The Odin-worship was not the only form of Pagan-

ism in the north of Europe. We find, in chapter 143 of the "Saga of Saint Olaf," an account of an expedition of Karl and Gunstein round the North Cape to Biarmeland, or the coast of the White Sea; and after trading for skins at the mouth of the Dwina, where Archangel now stands, of their proceeding, when the fair was over, to plunder the temple and idol of Jomala. They took a cup of silver coins that rested on his knee, a gold ornament that was round his neck, and treasure that was buried with the chiefs interred there, and retired to their ships. If this Jomala had been Thor or Odin, these vikings would not have plundered his temple, especially as one of them, Thorér Hund, was a zealous Odin-worshipper, and a martyr at last to his faith. We find, on the Baltic side of the country, that the Slavonic tribe who inhabit Esthonia had a Jomala, according to Kohl's "Reise in der Deutch-Russisch Ostsee Provinzen," 1842; and the name of Jomsborg given to the fortress of that singular association the Jomsborg Vikings on the island of Wollin, off the coast of Esthonia, seems to have had the same origin. The Joms-Vikings were a military association of pirates inhabiting the castle of Jomsborg; professing celibacy and obedience to their chief, and very similar to the orders of knights—as the Teutonic order, and that of Rhodes and the Templars—which appeared in Europe a century or two later; but these pirate-knights do not appear to have been in any way connected with the religion of Odin, or of Jomala. The Laplanders and Finlanders appear

to have worshipped Jomala\* also ; and he appears to have been altogether a Slavonic, not a Saxon god. From the account of the expedition to Biarmeland, the temple and idol of this worship must have been as rich, and the attendance of guards or priests on the temple much greater than in the Odin-worship in Norway in that age, viz., the beginning of the eleventh century.†

\* Jomala is still the name of the Deity—of God—among the Laplanders and Finlanders, according to Geijer.—*Svea Rikes Häfder*, p. 96.—L.

† On the subject of the old Norse religion the reader is referred to Anderson's "Norse Mythology," and to Viktor Rydberg's "Researches in Teutonic Mythology." The latter has been translated by Anderson, and published by Swan, Sonnenschein, & Co., London.

## CHAPTER III.

## OF THE SOCIAL CONDITION OF THE NORTHMEN.

IF the historical sagas tell us little concerning the religion and religious establishments of the pagan Northmen, they give us incidentally a great deal of curious and valuable information about their social condition and institutions; and these are of great interest, because they are the nearest sources to which we can trace almost all that we call Anglo-Saxon in our own social condition, institutions, national character, and spirit. The following observations are picked up from the sagas. The reader of Snorre Sturlason's "*Heimskringla*" has before him the facts, or narratives, and can see himself whether the following inferences from them are warranted, and the views given of the singular state of society among the Northmen correctly drawn.

The lowest class in the community were the Thræll (Thralls, slaves). They were the prisoners captured by the vikings at sea on piratical cruises, or carried off from the coasts of foreign countries in marauding expeditions. These captives were, if not ransomed by their friends, bought and sold at regular slave markets. The owners could kill them without any fine, mulct, or manbod to the king, as in the case of

the murder or manslaughter of a free man. King Olaf Trygvesson, in his childhood, his mother Astrid, and his foster-father Thorolf were captured by an Esthonian viking, as they were crossing the sea from Sweden on their way to Novgorod, and were divided among the crew, and sold. An Esthonian man called Klerkon got Olaf and Thorolf as his share of the booty; but Astrid was separated from her son Olaf, then only three years of age. Klerkon thought Thorolf too old for a slave, and that no work would be got out of him to repay his food, and therefore killed him; but sold the boy to a man called Klerk for a goat. A peasant called Reas bought him from Klerk for a good cloak; and he remained in slavery until he was accidentally recognised by his uncle, who was in the service of the Russian king, and was by him taken to the court of Novgorod, where he grew up. His mother Astrid, apparently long afterwards, was recognised by a Norwegian merchant called Lodin at a slave market to which she had been brought for sale. Lodin offered to purchase her, and carry her home to Norway, if she would accept of him in marriage, which she joyfully agreed to; Lodin being a man of good birth, who sometimes went on expeditions as a merchant, and sometimes on viking cruises. On her return to Norway her friends approved of the match as suitable; and when her son, King Olaf Trygvesson, came to the throne, Lodin and his sons by Astrid were in high favour. This account of the capturing, selling, and buying slaves, and killing one worn out, is related, as it

would be at present in the streets of Washington, as an ordinary matter.\* Slavery among the Anglo-Saxons at this period, namely, in the last half of the tenth century, appears to have become rather an *adscriptio glebæ*—the man sold or transferred with the land—than a distinct saleable property in the person of the slave ; at least we hear of no slave markets in England at which slaves were bought and sold. In Norway this class appears to have been better treated than on the south side of the Baltic, and to have had some rights. Lodin had to ask his slave Astrid to accept of him in marriage. We find them also in the first half of the eleventh century, at least under some masters, considered capable of acquiring and holding property of their own. When Asbiorn came from Halogaland in the north of Norway to purchase a cargo of meal and malt, of which articles King Olaf the Saint, fearing a scarcity, had prohibited the exportation from the south of Norway, he went to his relation Erling Skialgson, a peasant or *bondi*, who was married to a sister of the late King Olaf Trygvesson, and was a man of great power. Erling told Asbiorn that in consequence of the law he could not supply him, but that his thralls or slaves could probably sell him as much as he required for loading his vessel ; adding the remarkable observation, that they, the slaves, are not bound by the law and country regulation like other men,—evidently from the notion that they were not parties, like other men, to

\* This was written before the emancipation proclamation by Abraham Lincoln.



the making the law in the Thing. It is told of this Erling, who was one of the most considerable men in the country and brother-in-law of King Olaf Trygvesson, although of the bonde or peasant class, that he had always ninety free-born men in his house, and two hundred or more when Earl Hakon, then regent of the country, came into the neighbourhood; that he had a ship of thirty-two banks of oars; and when he went on a viking cruise, or in a levy with the king, had two hundred men at least with him. He had always on his farm thirty slaves, besides other workpeople; and he gave them a certain task as a day's work to do, and gave them leave to work for themselves in the twilight, or in the night. He also gave them land to sow, and gave them the benefit of their own crops; and he put upon them a certain value, so that they could redeem themselves from slavery, which some could do the first or second year, and "all who had any luck could do it in the third year." With this money Erling bought new slaves, and he settled those who had thus obtained their freedom on his newly cleared land, and found employment for them in useful trades, or in the herring fishery, for which he furnished them with nets and salt. The same course of management is ascribed in the Saga of Saint Olaf to his stepfather, Sigurd Syr, who is celebrated for his prudence, and wisdom, and skill in husbandry; and it has probably been general among the slaveholders. The slaves who had thus obtained their freedom would belong to what appears to have been a distinct class from the peasants or bondes on

the one hand, or the slaves on the other—the class of unfree men.

This class—the unfree—appears to have consisted of those who, not being udal-born to any land in the country, so as to be connected with, and have an interest in, the succession to any family estate, were not free of the Things; were not entitled to appear and deliberate in those assemblies; were not Thingsmen. This class of unfree is frequently mentioned in general levies for repelling invasion, when all men, free and unfree, are summoned to appear in arms; and the term unfree evidently refers to men who had personal freedom, and were not thralls, as the latter could only be collected to a levy by their masters. This class would include all the cottars on the land paying a rent in work upon the farm to the peasant, who was udal-born proprietor; and, under the name of housemen, this class of labourers in husbandry still exists on every farm in Norway. It would include also the house-carls, or freeborn indoor men, of whom Erling, we see, always kept ninety about him. They were, in fact, his bodyguard and garrison, the equivalent to the troop maintained by the feudal baron of Germany in his castle; and they followed the *bondi* or peasant in his summer excursions of piracy, or on the levy when called out by the king. They appear to have been free to serve whom they pleased. We find many of the class of *bondes* who kept a suite of eighty or ninety men; as Erling, Harek of Thiotta, and others. Svein, of the little isle of Gairsay (Gareksey) in Orkney, kept, we are

told in the Orkneyinga Saga, eighty men all winter ; and as we see the owner of this farm, which could not produce bread for one-fourth of that number, trusting for many years to his success in piracy for subsisting his retainers, we must conclude that they formed a numerous class of the community. This class would also include workpeople, labourers, fishermen, tradesmen, and others about towns and farms, or rural townships, who, although personally free and freeborn, not slaves, were unfree in respect of the rights possessed by the class of bondes, landowners, or peasants, in the Things. They had the protection and civil rights imparted by laws, but not the right to a voice in the enactment of the laws, or regulation of public affairs in the Things of the country. They were, in their rights, in the condition of the German population at the present day.

The class above the unfree in civil rights, the free peasant-proprietors, or bonde class, were the most important and influential in the community. We have no word in English, or in any other modern language, exactly equivalent to the word *bondi*, because the class itself never existed among us. Peasant does not express it ; because we associate with the word peasant the idea of inferior social importance to the feudal nobility, gentry, and landed proprietors of a country, and this bonde class was itself the highest class in the country. Yeoman, or, in Cumberland, statesman, expresses their condition only relatively to the portions of land owned by them ; not their social position as the highest class

of landowners. If the Americans had a word to express the class of small landowners in their old settled states who live on their little properties, have the highest social influence in the country, and are its highest class, and, although without family aggrandisement by primogeniture succession, retain family distinction and descent, and even family pride, but divide their properties on the udal principle among their children, it would express more justly what the bonde class were than the words landholder, yeoman, statesman, peasant-proprietor, or peasant. In the following translation of the *Heimskringla*, where the word peasant is used for the word *bóndi*,\* the reader will have to carry in mind that these peasants were, in fact, an hereditary aristocracy, comprehending the great mass of the population, holding their little estates by a far more independent tenure than the feudal nobility of other countries, and having their land strictly entailed on their own families and kin, and with much family pride, and much regard for and record of their family descent and alliances, because each little estate was entailed on each peasant's whole family and kin. Udal right was, and is to this day in Norway, a

\* *Bóndi* (in the plural *bændr*) does not suit the English ear, and there is no reasoning with the ear in matters of language. The word itself, *bóndi* or *buandi*, is present participle of the verb *búa* to live, abide, dwell, turned into a noun. It is of the same root as the Anglo-Saxon *buan* and the German *Bauer*. The word *bu* is still retained in Orkney and Shetland, to express the principal farm and farm-house of a small township or property, the residence of the proprietor; and is used in Denmark and Norway to express stock, or farm stock and substance. The law distinguishes between a grid-man, a labourer, a budsetu-man, a cottager, and a *bóndi*, a man, who has land or stock.

species of entail, in realty, in the family that is udal-born to it. The udal land could not be alienated by sale, gift to the church, escheat to a superior, forfeiture, or by any other casualty, from the kindred who were udal-born to it; and they had, however distantly connected, an eventual right of succession vested in them superior to any right a stranger in blood could acquire. The udal-born to a piece of land could evict any other possessor, and, until a very late period, even without any repayment of what the new possessor having no udal right may have paid for it, or laid out upon it; and at the present day a right of redemption within a certain number of years is competent to those udal-born to an estate which has been sold out of a family. The right to the crown of Norway itself was udal-born right in a certain family or race, traced from Odin down to Harald Harfager through the Yngling dynasty, as a matter of religious faith; but from Harald Harfager as a fixed legal and historical point. All who were of his blood were udal-born to the Norwegian crown, and with equal rights of succession in equal degrees of propinquity. The eldest son had no exclusive right, either by law or in public opinion, to the whole succession, and the kingdom was more than once divided equally among all the sons. This principle of equal succession appears to have been so rooted in the social arrangement and public mind, that notwithstanding all the evils it produced in the succession to the crown by internal warfare between brothers, it seems never to have been shaken as a

principle of right ; and the kings who had laboured the most to unite the whole country into one sovereignty, as Harald Harfager, were the first to divide it again among their sons. One cause of this may have been the impossibility, among all classes, from the king to the peasant, of providing otherwise for the younger branches of a family than by giving them a portion of the land itself, or of the products of the land paid instead of money taxes to the crown. Legitimacy of birth was held of little account, owing probably to marriage not being among the Odin-worshippers a religious as well as a civil act ; for we find all the children, illegitimate as well as legitimate, esteemed equal in udal-born right even to the throne itself ; and although high descent on the mother's side also appears to have been esteemed, it was no obstacle even to the succession to the crown that the mother, as in the case of Magnus the Good, had been a slave. This was the consequence of polygamy, in which, as in the East, the kings indulged. Harald Harfager had nine wives at once, and many concubines ; and every king, even King Olaf the Saint, had concubines as well as wives ; and we find polygamy indulged in down to about 1130, when Sigurd the Crusader's marriage with Cecilia, at the time his queen was alive and not divorced, was opposed by the Bishop of Bergen, who would not celebrate it ; but nevertheless the priest of Stavanger performed the ceremony, on the king's duly paying the church for the <sup>dispensation</sup> ~~indulgence~~. Polygamy appears not to have been confined to kings and great men ; for we find

in the old Icelandic law book, called the "Gray Goose," that, in determining the mutual rights of succession of persons born in either country, Norway or Iceland, in the other country, it is provided that children born in Norway in bigamy should have equal right as legitimate children,—which also proves that in Iceland civilisation was advanced so much further than in Norway that bigamy was not lawful there, and its offspring not held legitimate. Each little estate was the kingdom in miniature, sometimes divided among children, and again reunited by succession of single successors by udal-born right vesting it in one. These landowners, with their entailed estates, old families, and extensive kin or clanship, might be called the nobility of the country, but that, from their great numbers and small properties, the tendency of the equal succession to land being to prevent the concentration of it into great estates, they were the peasantry. In social influence they had no class, like the aristocracy of feudal countries, above them. All the legislation, and the administration of law also, was in their hands. They alone conferred the crown at their Things. No man, however clear and undisputed his right of succession, ventured to assume the kingly title, dignity, and power but by the vote and concurrence of a Thing. He was proposed by a bonde; his right explained; and he was received by the Thing before he could levy subsistence, or men and aid, or exert any act of kingly power within the jurisdiction of the Thing. After being received and proclaimed at the Ore

Thing held at Throndhjem as the general or sole king of Norway, the upper king,—which that Thing alone had the right to do,—he had still to present himself to each of the other district Things, of which there were four, to entitle him to exercise royal authority, or enjoy the rights of royalty within their districts. The bondes of the district, who had voice and influence in those Things by family connection and personal merit, were the first men in the country. Their social importance is illustrated by the remarkable fact, that established kings—as, for instance, King Olaf Trygveson—married their sisters and daughters to powerful bondes, while others of their sisters and daughters were married to the kings of Sweden and Denmark. Erling the bonde refused the title of Earl when he married Astrid, the king's sister. Lodin married the widow of a king, and the mother of King Olaf Trygveson. There was no idea of disparagement, or inferiority, in such alliances ; which shows how important and influential this class was in the community.

It is here, in these assemblies or Things of the Northmen, the immediate predecessors of the Norman conquerors, and their ancestors also—by which, however rudely, legislation and all parliamentary principles were exercised—that we must look for the origin of our parliaments, and the spirit and character of our people; on which, and not on the mere forms, our constitution is founded. The Witenagemot of the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchic kings were not, like the Things of the Northmen, existing



and influential assemblies of the people meeting *suo jure* at stated times, enacting and administering laws, and so interwoven with the whole social and political idiosyncrasy of the people, that the State could have no movement or existence but through such assemblies. The Wittenagemot, as the name implies, appears to have been merely a council of the wise and important men of the country, selected by the king to meet, consult, and advise with him—which is as different from a Thing as a cabinet council from a parliament. The Northmen who invaded and colonised the kingdom of Northumberland, had entirely expelled other occupants in the ninth century. The Anglo-Saxons had fled before the pagan and barbarous invaders who seized and settled on the lands, and, from the proximity to Norway and Denmark, received a rapid accession to their numbers by the influx of new settlers, as well as by their own increase of population. Normandy was only conquered by the Northmen, but Northumberland was colonised. Their religion, language, and laws were established. They had their own, and [not the Anglo-Saxon laws: a proof that they were a population not Anglo-Saxon in their social institutions. This appears from the laws of Edward the Elder, of Alfred himself, and from the treaties of these kings with Guthrun, the leader or chief of the Northmen who then occupied Northumberland. The kingdom of Northumberland, comprehending the present counties of York, Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, and

parts of Lancashire ; East Anglia also, comprehending the Isle of Ely, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk ; and the country of the former East Saxons, comprehending Essex, Middlesex, and part of Hertfordshire, and also parts of the northern and southern extremities of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia—were so entirely occupied by Danes, or people of Danish descent, that they were under Danish, not Anglo-Saxon law. From the first invasions of the Danes in 787, or from the end of the eighth century to the time of the Norman conquest in 1066, or nearly 300 years, the laws and usages of the Northmen had prevailed over this large portion of the island. This kingdom of Northumberland would, at the present day, be more populous and wealthy than either of the kingdoms of Sweden, Denmark, Hanover, Holland, Belgium, Saxony, or Würtemberg, and had no doubt a proportional importance in those times. The Northmen, immediately previous to the Norman conquest, had conquered the whole of England, and held it from 1003 to 1041, for four successive reigns ; viz., of Svein, Canute the Great, Harald Harefoot, and Hardicanute. In the laws of Edward the Confessor, as given by Lambart in 1568, and republished by Wheloch at the end of his edition of Bede, 1644, it is stated that for sixty-eight years previous to the Norman conquest, these Anglo-Saxon laws, originally framed by Edgar, had been out of use ; and when William the Conqueror, in the fourth year of his reign, renewed these laws of Edward the Confessor, he was more inclined to

retain the laws of the Northmen then in general use. If we strike off Wales, Cornwall, the western borders towards Scotland, and all comprehended in the kingdom of Northumberland, East Anglia, and other parts peopled by Northmen and their descendants, it is difficult to believe that the old Anglo-Saxon branch could have been predominant in the island, in numbers, power, and social influence; or could have prevailed to such an extent over the character and spirit of the population as to bury all social movement under the apathy and superstition in which they appear to have been sunk. The rebellions against William the Conqueror and his successors appear to have been almost always raised, or mainly supported, in the counties of recent Danish descent, not in those peopled by the old Anglo-Saxon race. The spirit and character of men having rights in society were undoubtedly renewed, and kept alive in England, by this great infusion into the population of people who had these rights, and the spirit and character produced by them, in their native land. A new and more vigorous branch was planted in the country than the old Anglo-Saxon. In historical research it is surely more reasonable to go to the nearest source of the institutions, laws, and spirit of a people—to the recent and great infusion into England from the north, during the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, of men bred up in a rude but vigorous exercise of their rights in legislation, and in all the acts of their government—than to the most remote, and to trace in the obscure hints

of Tacitus of popular and free institutions existing a thousand years before in the forests of Germany, the origin of our parliaments, constitution, and national character. The German people, the true unmixed descendants of the old Saxon race whom Tacitus describes, never, from the earliest date in modern history to the present day, had a single hour of religious, civil, and political liberty, as nations, or as individuals—never enjoyed the rights which the American citizen or the British subject, however imperfectly, enjoy in the freedom of person, property, and mind, at the present day, in their social condition. If the great stock itself of the Anglo-Saxon race has not transmitted to its immediate posterity in its own land the institutions of a free people, nor the spirit, character, independence of mind, on which alone they can be founded with stability, it appears absurd to trace to that stock our free institutions, and the principles in our character and spirit by which they are maintained, when we find a source so much nearer from which they would naturally flow. Our civil, religious, and political rights—the principles, spirit, and forms of legislation through which they work in our social union, are the legitimate offspring of the Things of the Northmen, not of the Wittenagemot of the Anglo-Saxons—of the independent Norse viking, not of the abject Saxon monk.

It would be a curious inquiry for the political philosopher to examine the causes which produced, in the tenth century, such a difference in the social

condition of the Northmen, and of the cognate Anglo-Saxon branch in England and Germany. Physical causes connected with the nature of the country and climate, as well as the conventional causes of udal right, and the exclusion of inheritance by primogeniture, prevented the accumulation of land into large estates, and the rise of a feudal nobility like that of Germany. The following physical causes appear not only to have operated directly in preventing the growth of the feudal system in the country of the Northmen, but to have produced some of the conventional causes also which concurred to prevent it.

The Scandinavian peninsula consists of a vast table of mountain land, too elevated in general for cultivation, or even for the pasturage of large herds or flocks together in any one locality; and although sloping gently towards the Baltic or the Sound on the Swedish side, and there susceptible of the same inhabitation and husbandry as other countries, in as far as climate and soil will allow, on the other side,—the proper country of the Northmen,—throwing out towards the sea all round huge prongs of rocky and lofty ridges, either totally bare of soil, or covered with pine forests, growing apparently out of the very rock, and with no useful soil beneath them. The valleys and deep glens between these ridges, which shoot up into lofty pinnacles, precipices, and mountains, are filled at the lower end by the ocean, forming fiords, as these inlets of the sea are called, which run far up into the land, in some cases a hundred

miles or more ; yet so narrow that the stones, it is said, rolling down from the mountain slope on one side of such a fiord, are often projected from the steep overhanging precipice, in which the slope half-way down ends, across to the opposite shore. These fiords in general, however, are fine expanses or inland lakes of the ocean,—calm, deep, pure blue ; and shut in on every side by black precipices and green forests, and with fair wooded islets sleeping on the bosom of the water. These fiords are the peculiar and characteristic feature of Norwegian scenery. Rivers of great volume of water, but generally of short and rapid course, pour into the fiords from the Fielde, or high table-land behind, which forms the body or mass of the country. It is on the flat spots of arable land on the borders of these fiords, rivers, and the lakes into which the rivers expand, that the population lives. In some of these river-valleys and sea-valleys, a single farm of a few acres of land is only found here and there in many miles of country, the bare rock dipping at once into the blue deep water, and leaving no margin for cultivation. In others, narrow slips of inhabitable arable land extend some way, but are hemmed in behind, on the land side, by the rocky ridges which form the valley ; and they are seldom broad enough to admit of two rows of little farms, or even of two large fields, in the breadth between the hill-foot and the water ; and in the length are often interrupted by some bare prong of rock jutting from the side-ridge into the slip of arable level land,

and dividing it from such another slip. All the land capable of cultivation, either with spade or plough, has been cultivated from the most remote times; and there is little room for improvement, because it is the ground rock destitute of soil, not merely trees or loose rocks encumbering the soil, that opposes human industry. The little estates, not averaging perhaps fifty acres each of arable land, are densely inhabited; because the seasons for preparing the ground, sowing, and reaping, are so brief, that all husbandry work must be performed in the shortest possible time, and consequently at the expense of supporting, all the year, a great many hands on the farm to perform it; and the fishing in the fiord, river, or lake, the summer pasturage for cattle in the distant fielde-glens attached to each little estate in the inhabited country, and a little wood-cutting in the forest, afford subsistence to many more people than the little farm itself would require for its cultivation in a better clime, or could support from its own produce. The extent of every little property has been settled for ages, and want of soil and space prevents any alteration in the extent, and keeps it within the unchangeable boundaries of rock and water. It is highly interesting to look at these original little family estates of the men who, in the ninth and tenth centuries, played so important a part in the finest countries of Europe,—who were the origin of the men and events we see at this day, and whose descendants are now seated on the thrones and in the palaces of Europe, and in the

West are making a new world of social arrangements for themselves. The sites, and even the names, of the little estates or gards on which these men were born, remain unchanged, in many instances, to this day; and the posterity of the original proprietors of the ninth century may reasonably be supposed, in a country in which the land is entailed by udal right upon the family, to be at this day the possessors—engaged, however, now in cutting wood for the French or Newcastle market, instead of in conquering Normandy and Northumberland.

Some of our great English nobility and gentry leave their own splendid seats, parks, and estates in England, to enjoy shooting and fishing in Norway for a few weeks. They are little aware that they are perhaps passing by the very estates which their own ancestors once ploughed,—sleeping on the same spot of this earth on which their forefathers, a thousand years ago, slept, and were at home; men, too, as proud then of their high birth, of their descent, through some seven-and-twenty generations, from Odin, or his followers the Godes, as their posterity are now of having “come in with or before the Conqueror.” The common traveller visiting this land destitute of architectural remains of former magnificence, without the temples and classical ruins of Italy, or the cathedrals and giant castles of Germany, will yet feel here that the memorials of former generations may be materially insignificant, yet morally grand. These little farms and houses, as they stand at this day, were the homes of men whose rude, but



just and firm sense of their civil and political rights in society is, in the present times, radiating from the spark of it they kindled in England, and working out in every country the emancipation of mankind from the thralldom of the institutions which grew up under the Roman empire, and still cover Italy and Germany, along with the decaying ruins of the splendour, taste, magnificence, power, and oppression of their rulers. Europe holds no memorials of ancient historical events which have been attended by such great results in our times, as some rude excavations in the shore-banks of the island of Viger,\* in Sondmore,—which are pointed out by the finger of tradition as the dry docks in which the vessels of Rolf Ganger, from whom the fifth in descent was our William the Conqueror, were drawn up in winter, and from whence he launched them, and set out from Norway on the expedition in which he conquered Normandy. The philosopher might seat himself beside the historian amidst the ruins of the Capitol, and with Rome, and all the monuments of Roman power and magnificence under his eye, might venture to ask whether they, magnificent and imposing as they are, suggest ideas of greater social interest,—are connected with grander moral results on the condition, well-being, and civilisation of the human race in every land, than these rude excavations in the isle of Viger, which once held Rolf Ganger's vessels.

\* Vigrey, the isle of Viger, is situated in Haram parish, in the bailiwick of Sondmore.—*Strohm's Biskrivelse over Møre*, and *Kraft's Norge*.—L.

It is evident that such a country in such a climate never could have afforded a rent, either in money or in natural products, for the use of the land, to a class of feudal nobility possessing it in great estates, although it may afford a subsistence to a class of small working landowners, like the bondes, giving their own labour to the cultivation, and helping out their agricultural means of living with the earnings of their labour in other occupations—in piracy and pillage on the coasts of other countries in the ninth century, and in the nineteenth with the cod fishery, the herring fishery, the wood trade, and other peaceful occupations of industry. On account of these physical circumstances—of a soil and climate which afford no surplus produce from land, after subsisting the needful labourers, to go as rent to a landlord—no powerful body of feudal nobility could grow up in Norway, as in other countries in the Middle Ages; and from the same causes, now in modern times, during the 400 years previous to 1814 in which Denmark had held Norway, all the encouragement that could be given by the Danish government to raising a class of nobility in Norway was unavailing. Slavery even could not exist in any country in which the labour of the slave would barely produce the subsistence of the slave, and would leave no surplus gain from his labour for a master; still less could a nobility, or body of great landowners drawing rent, subsist where land can barely produce subsistence for the labour which, in consequence of the shortness of the seasons, is required in very large quantity, in proportion to the

area, for its cultivation. We find, accordingly, that when the viking trade, the occupation of piracy and pillage, was extinguished by the influence of Christianity, the progress of civilisation, the rise of the Hanseatic League and of its establishments, which in Norway itself both repressed piracy and gave beneficial occupation in the fisheries to the surplus population formerly occupied in piracy and warfare, that class of people fell back upon husbandry and ordinary occupations which had formerly been engaged all summer and autumn in marauding expeditions; and the class of slaves, the thralls, was necessarily superseded in their utility by people living at home all the year. The last piratical expeditions were about the end of the twelfth century, and in the following century thralldom, or slavery, was, it is understood, abolished by law by Magnus the Law Improver. The labour of the slave was no longer needed at home, and would not pay the cost of his subsistence.

Physical circumstances also, and not conventional or accidental circumstances, evidently moulded the other social arrangements of the Northmen into a shape different from the feudal. The Things or assemblies of the people, which kings had to respect and refer to, may be deduced much more reasonably from natural causes similar to those which prevented the rise of a feudal class of nobles in Norway, than from political institutions or principles of social arrangement carried down from the ancient Germans in a natural state of liberty in remote ages. The

same causes will produce the same effects in all ages. It is refining too much in political antiquarianism to refer all liberal social arrangements—our English parliaments, our constitutional checks upon the executive power in the State, our popular representation, and the spirit of our laws—to the Wittenagemots of the Saxons, and to trace these again up to principles of freedom in social arrangement derived from the Germanic tribes in the days of Tacitus. But it is not refining too much to conclude that, in every age and country, there are but two ways in which the governing class of a community can issue their laws, commands, or will, to the governed. One is through writing, and by the arts of writing and reading being so generally diffused that in every locality one individual at least, the civil functionary or the parish priest, is able to communicate the law, command, or will of the governing, to that small group of the governed over which he is placed. The other way, and the only way where, from the nature of the soil and climate, the governed are widely scattered, and writing and reading are rarely attained, and such civil or clerical arrangement not efficient, was to convene Things or general assemblies of the people, at which the law, command, or will of the governing could be made known to the governed. There could be no other way, in poor, thinly inhabited countries especially, by which the governing, however despotic, could get their law, command, or will done; for these must be made known to be executed or obeyed, whether they were for a levy of

men or of money, for war or for peace, for rewarding and honouring, or for punishing and disgracing—the law, command, or will must be promulgated. Nor is it refining too much to conclude, that where-soever men are assembled together in numbers for public business, be it merely to hear the law, command, or will of a despotic ruler, the spirit of deliberating upon, considering, and judging of the decree given out, and of the public interests involved in it, is there in the midst of them. The democratic element of society is there,—the spirit of judging in their own affairs is there, and is let loose; for such an assembly is in effect a parliament, in which public opinion will make itself heard; and coming from the only military force of those ages, the mass of the people, and, in the North, of a people without military subordination to a feudal aristocracy in civil affairs, must predominate over the will of the king supported only by his court retinue. The concurrence of a few great nobles could not here give effect to the royal command, law, or will; because the few, the intermediate link of a powerful aristocracy, which to this day chains the Anglo-Saxon race on the Continent, was from physical causes—the poverty of the soil—totally wanting among the Northmen, and the kings had to deal direct with the people in great general assemblies or Things. The necessity of holding such general meetings or Things for announcing to the people the levies of men, ships, and provisions required of them, and for all public business, and the check given by the Things to all

measures not approved of by the public judgment, appear in every page of the *Heimskringla*, and constitute its great value, in fact, to us, as a record of the state of social arrangement among our ancestors. The necessity of assembling the people was so well established, that we find no public act whatsoever undertaken without the deliberation of a Thing; and the principle was so engrafted in the spirit of the people, that even the attack of an enemy, the course to be taken in dangerous circumstances, to retreat or advance, were laid before a Thing of all the people in the fleet or army; and they often referred it to the king's own judgment, that is, the king took authority from the Thing to act in the emergency on his own plan and judgment. A reference to the people in all that concerned them was interwoven with the daily life of the Northmen, in peace and in war. We read of House Things, of Court Things, of District Things for administering law, of Things for consultation of all engaged in an expedition; and in all matters, and on all occasions, in which men were embarked with common interests, a reference to themselves, a universal spirit of self-government in society, was established. King Sverre, who reigned from 1184 to 1202, after the period when Snorre Sturlason's work ends, although taking his own way in his military enterprises, appears in a saga of his reign never to have omitted calling a Thing, and bringing it round by his speeches, which are often very characteristic, to his own opinion and plans.

So essential were Things considered wheresoever men were acting with a common stake and interest, that in war expeditions the call to a Thing on the war-horn or trumpet appears to have been a settled signal-call known to all men,—like the call to arms, or the call to attack; and each kind of Thing, whether it was a general Thing that was summoned, or a House Thing of the king's counsellors, or a Hird Thing of the court, or of the leaders of the troops, appears to have had its distinct peculiar call on the war-horn known to all men. In the ordinary affairs of the country, the Things were assembled in a simple and effective way. A *bod*, called a *bud-stikke* in Norway, where it is still used, was a stick of wood like a constable's baton, with a spike at the end of it, which was passed from house to house, as a signal for the people to assemble. In each house it was well known to which neighbouring house it had to be passed, and the penalties for detaining the *bod* were very heavy. In modern times, the place, house, and occasion of meeting, are stated on a slip of paper enclosed in the bottom of the *bud-stick*; but in former times the Thing-place, and the time allowed for repairing there, were known, and whether to go armed or unarmed was the only matter requiring to be indicated. An arrow split into four parts was the known token for appearing in arms. If the people of a house to which the token was carried were from home, and the door locked, the bearer had to stick it on the door by the spike inserted in one end for this purpose; if the door

was open, but the people not at home, the bearer had "to stick it in the house-father's great chair at the fireside;" and this was to be held a legal delivery of the token, exonerating the last bearer from the penalties for detaining it. The peace token, a simple stick with a spike; the war token, an arrow split into quarters, and sent out in different directions; a token in shape of an axe, to denote the presence of the king at the Thing; and one in shape of the cross, to denote that Church matters were to be considered,—are understood to have been used before writing and reading were diffused. On one occasion, we read of Earl Hakon issuing the usual token for the bondes to meet him at a Thing; and it was exchanged, in its course, for the war token, and the bondes appeared in arms, and overpowered the Earl and his attendants.

The Things appear not to have been representative, but primary assemblies, of all the bondes of the district udal-born to land. In Sweden there appears to have been one general Thing held at Upsala, at the time when the festivals or sacrifices to Thor, Odin, and Frigg, were celebrated. From the proceedings of one of the Things held at Upsala, in February or March, 1018, related in the Saga of Saint Olaf, we may have some idea of the power of those assemblies. King Olaf of Sweden, who had a great dislike to Olaf King of Norway, was forced by this Thing to conclude a peace with, and give his daughter in marriage to, King Olaf of Norway, in order to put an end to hostilities between the two



countries; and they threatened, by their lagman, to depose him for misgovernment, if he refused the treaty and alliance which King Olaf of Norway proposed by his ambassador Hialte the Skald. The lagman appears to have been the depositary and expounder of the laws passed by the Things, and to have been either appointed by the people as their president at the Things, or to have held his office by hereditary succession from the gode, and to have been priest and judge, exercising both the religious and judicial function. At this general Thing at Upsala the lagman of the district of Upland was entitled to preside; and his influence and power in this national assembly appear to have been much greater than the king's. It is a picturesque circumstance, mentioned in the Saga of Saint Olaf about this Thing at Upsala in 1018, that when Thorgny the lagman rose after the ambassador from Norway had delivered his errand, and the Swedish king had replied to it, all the bondes, who had been sitting on the grass before, rose up, and crowded together to hear what their lagman Thorgny was going to say; and the old lagman, whose white and silky beard is stated to have been so long that it reached his knees when he was seated, allowed the clanking of their arms and the din of their feet to subside before he began his speech. The Things appear to have been always held in the open air, and the people were seated; and the speakers, even the kings, rose up to address them. In the characters of great men given in the sagas we always find

eloquence, ready agreeable speaking, a good voice, a quick apprehension, a ready delivery, and winning manners, reckoned the highest qualities of a popular king or eminent chief. His talent as a public speaker is never omitted. In Sweden this one general Thing appears to have been for the whole country; and besides the religious or civil business, a kind of fair for exchanging commodities arose from the concourse of people to it from all parts of the country. In Norway,—owing no doubt to the much greater difference in the means of subsistence in the different quarters of the country, in some of which fishing-grounds out at sea, and even rocks abounding in sea-fowl eggs at the season, were subjects of property; in others pasturages in distant mountain glens, and in others arable lands only, are of importance,—four distinct Things appear in the oldest times to have been necessary for framing laws suitable to the different circumstances of their respective jurisdictions; and, within their jurisdictions, the smaller district Things appear to have determined law cases between parties according to the laws settled at the great Things; and as the mulcts or money penalties paid for all crimes went partly to the king, and were an important branch of the royal revenue, the kings, on their progresses through the land, with the lagman of each district, appear to have held these Things for administering justice and collecting their revenue. The king's bailiff, or the tacksman or donatory of the revenue of the district, appears to have held these Law

Things in the king's absence. The great Things appear to have been legislative, and the small district Things within their circle of jurisdiction administrative. Of the great Things there were in old times four in different quarters of Norway. The Frosta Thing was held in the Thronthjem country, at a place called Frosta, in the present bailiwick of Frosten; Gula Thing, at Eyvindvik, in the shiprath of Gule, on the west coast of Norway; Eidsivia Thing, at Eidsvold, in Upper Raumarike, for the inland or upland districts of Norway; and Borgar Thing, at the old burgh called Sarpsborg, on the river Glommen, near the great waterfall called Sarpsfors. One or two other Law Things appear to have been added in later times: one in Halogaland for the people living far north, and one on the coast between the jurisdiction or circle of the Sarpsborg Thing and that of the Gula Thing. A special Thing, called the Ore Thing, from being held on the Ore, or isthmus\* of the river Nid, on which the city of Thronthjem stands, was considered the only Thing which could confer the sovereignty of the whole of Norway, the other Things having no right to powers beyond their own circles. It was only convened for this special purpose of examining and proclaiming the right to the whole kingdom; and it appears to have been only the kingship *de jure* that the Ore Thing considered and confirmed: the king had still to repair to each Law Thing and small

\* The narrow slip of land between two waters, as at a river-mouth or outlet of a lake, between it and the sea, is still called an Are or Ayre in the north of Scotland, and is the same as the Icelandic *Eyrr*.—L.

Thing, to obtain their acknowledgment of his right, and the power of a sovereign within their jurisdictions. The scat or land-tax,—the right of guest-quarters or subsistence on royal progresses,—the levy of men, ships, provisions, arms, for defence at home, or war expeditions abroad, had to be adjudged to the kings by the Things; and amidst the perpetual contests between udal-born claimants, the principle of referring to the Things for the right and power of a sovereign, and for the title of king, was never set aside. No class but the bondes appeared at Things with any power. The kings themselves appear to have been but Thing-men at a Thing.

Two circumstances, which may be called accidental, concurred with the physical circumstances of the country, soil, and clime, to prevent the rise of a feudal nobility in Norway at the period, the ninth century, when feudality was establishing itself over the rest of Europe. One was the colonisation of Iceland by that class which in other countries became feudal lords; the other was the conquests in England and in France, by leaders who drew off all of the same class of more warlike habits than the settlers in Iceland, and opened a more promising field for their ambition abroad in those expeditions, than in struggling at home against the supremacy of Harald Harfager. In his successful attempt to reduce all the small kings, or district kings, under his authority, he was necessarily thrown upon the people for support, and their influence would be

naturally increased by the suppression through their aid of the small independent kings. This struggle was renewed at intervals until the introduction of Christianity by King Olaf the Saint ; and the two parties appear to have supported the two different religions : the small kings and their party adhering to the old religion of Odin, under which the small kings, as godes, united the offices of judge and priest, and levied certain dues, and presided at the sacrificial meetings as judges as well as priests ; and the other party, which included the mass of the people, supported Christianity, and the supremacy of King Olaf, because it relieved them from the exactions of the local kings, and from internal war and pillage. The influence of the people, and of their Things, gained by the removal to other countries of that class which at home would have grown probably into a feudal aristocracy. In Iceland an aristocratic republic was at first established, and in Normandy and Northumberland all that was aristocratic in Norway found an outlet for its activity.

A physical circumstance also almost peculiar to Norway, and apparently very little connected with the social state of a people, was of great influence, in concurrence with those two accidental circumstances, in preventing the rise of an aristocracy. The stone of the Peninsula in general, and of Norway in particular, is gneiss, or other hard primary rock, which is worked with difficulty, and breaks up in rough shapeless lumps, or in thin schistose plates ; and walls cannot be constructed of such building materials

without great labour, time, and command of cement. Limestone is not found in abundance in Norway, and is rare in situations in which it can be made and easily transported ; and even clay, which is used as a bedding or cement in some countries for rough lumps of stone in thick walls, is scarce in Norway. Wood has of necessity, in all times and with all classes, been the only building material. This circumstance has been of great influence in the Middle Ages on the social condition of the Northmen. Castles of nobles or kings, commanding the country round, and secure from sudden assault by the strength of the building, could not be constructed, and never existed in Norway. The huge fragments and ruins of baronial castles and strongholds, so characteristic of the state of society in the Middle Ages in the feudal countries of Europe, and so ornamental in the landscape now, are wanting in Norway. The noble had nothing to fall back upon but his war-ship, the king nothing but the support of the people. In the reign of our King Stephen, when England was covered with the fortified castles of the nobility, to the number, it is somewhere stated, of 1500, and was laid waste by their exactions and private wars, the sons of Harald Gille—the kings Sigurd, Inge, and Eystein—were referring their claims and disputes to the decision of Things of the people. In Normandy and England the Northmen and their descendants felt the want in their mother-country of secure fortresses for their power ; and the first and natural object of the alien landholders was to build castles, and lodge them-

selves in safety by stone walls against sudden assaults, and above all against the firebrand of the midnight assailant. In the mother-country, to be surprised and burned by night within the wooden structures in which even kings had to reside, was a fate so common, that some of the kings appeared to have lived on board ships principally, or on islands on the coast.

This physical circumstance of wanting the building material of which the feudal castles of other countries were constructed, and by which structures the feudal system itself was mainly supported, had its social as well as political influences on the people. The different classes were not separated from each other, in society, by the important distinction of a difference in the magnitude or splendour of their dwellings. The peasant at the corner of the forest could, with his time, material, and labour of his family at command, lodge himself as magnificently as the king,—and did so. The mansions of kings and great chiefs were no better than the ordinary dwellings of the bondes. Lade, near Throndhjem,—the seat of kings before the city of Throndhjem, or Nidaros, was founded by King Olaf Trygvesson, and which was the mansion of Earl Hakon the Great, and of many distinguished men who were earls of Lade,—was, and is, a wooden structure of the ordinary dimensions of the houses of the opulent bondes in the district. Egge—the seat of Kalf Arneson, who led the bonde army against King Olaf which defeated and slew him at the battle of Stiklestad,

and who was a man of great note and social importance in his day—is, and always has been, such a farm-house of logs as may be seen on every ordinary farm estate of the same size. The foundation of a few loose stones, on which the lower tier of logs is laid to raise it from the earth, remains always the same, although all the superstructure of wood may have been often renewed; but these show the extent on the ground of the old houses. The equality of all ranks in those circumstances of lodging, food, clothing, fuel, furniture, which form great social distinctions among people of other countries, must have nourished a feeling of independence of external circumstances—a feeling, also, of their own worth, rights, and importance, among the bondes—and must have raised their habits, character, and ideas to a nearer level to those of the highest. The kings, having no royal residences, were lodged, with their court attendants, on the royal progresses, habitually by the bondes, and entertained by them. At the present day there are no royal mansions, or residences of the great in Norway, different from the ordinary houses of the bondes or peasant-proprietors. His Majesty Carl Johan has to lodge in their houses in travelling through his Norwegian dominions; and no king in Europe could travel through his kingdom, and be lodged so well every night by the same class. In ancient times the kings lived in guest-quarters—that is, by billet upon the peasant-proprietors in different districts in regular turn; and even this kind of intercourse must have kept alive



a high feeling of their own importance in the bonde class, in the times when, from the want of the machinery of a lettered functionary class, civil or clerical, all public business had to be transacted directly with them in their Things. The rise and diffusion of letters, learning, and a learned class, in the Middle Ages, retarded perhaps rather than advanced just principles of government and legislation. The people were more enslaved by the power which the learning of the Middle Ages threw into the hands of their rulers, than they were before in the ages of ignorance of letters, when their rude force was in direct contact, face to face, with the rude power of their rulers. This prejudicial effect of the revival of letters on civil, political, and religious liberty, by doing away with all direct *viva voce* communication in assemblies of the people between the rulers and the ruled, may be traced even to the present day in Germany and other countries. The people have no influence in their own concerns, because a lettered body of functionaries, spread over the whole social body, and fixed in every locality, receives, and disseminates to the small groups of the population under their jurisdiction, the law, command, or will of the autocratic government, without that reference to the people which could not be avoided when all had to be convened in a Thing or assembly to hear the promulgation. The period in which the influence of the governed should have been made effective slipped by on the Continent, among the Anglo-Saxon race, without being used ;

and probably would have slipped by in England also, but for the recent admixture of a wilder, more ignorant, and more free people, in a great proportion of the island, who could not even be oppressed without collecting them into Things, or Folkmots, to make known to them what they had to submit to. The very ignorance of the half pagan people of mixed or pure Danish descent who occupied so large a portion of the island at the Norman conquest, was the providential means of keeping alive that spirit of self-government in public affairs among the people, on which, and not on the mere forms of representative government, our social economy rests. The forms are useless without the life in the spirit of the people to animate them. France, and some countries of Germany, have got the moulds; but the stuff to fill them with is wanting in the people. We inherit this stuff in the national character from the great intermixture of the rude energetic Northmen, bred up in Things and consultations with their leaders, which took place during the Danish conquest immediately previous to the invasion of William the Conqueror; and in the generation immediately after his conquest this stuff began to show itself in fermentation, and worked out our present social institutions, and the spirit of our national character.

The lenders, or tacksmen of the king's farms and revenues, could scarcely be called a class. They were temporary functionaries, not hereditary nobles; and had no feudal rights or jurisdiction, but had to

plead in the Things like other bondes. As individuals they appear to have obtained power and influence, but not as a class ; and they never transmitted it to their posterity.

The earls, or jarls, were still less than the lendermen a body of nobility approaching to the feudal barons of other lands. The title appears to have been altogether personal ; not connected with property in land, or any feudal rights or jurisdiction. The Earls of Orkney—of the family of Ragnvald Earl of More, the friend of Harald Harfager, and father of Rolf Ganger—appear to have been the only family of hereditary nobles under the Norwegian crown exercising a kind of feudal power. The Earls of More appear to have been only functionaries or lendermen collecting the king's taxes, and managing the royal lands in the district, and retaining a part for their remuneration. The Earls of Orkney, however, of the first line, appear to have grown independent, and to have paid only military service, and a nominal quitrent, and only when forced to do so. This line appears to have been broken in upon in 1129, when Kale, the son of Kol, was made earl, under the name of Earl Ragnvald. His father Kol was married to the sister of Earl Magnus the Saint ; but the direct male descendants of the old line, the sons of Earl Magnus's brothers, appear not to have been extinct. In Norway, from the time of Earl Hakon of Lade, who was regent or viceroy for the Danish kings when they expelled the Norwegian descendants of

Harfager, there appears to have been a jealousy of conferring the title of earl, as it probably implied some of Earl Hakon's power in the opinion of the people. Harald Harfager had appointed sixteen earls, one for each district, when he suppressed the small kings; but they appear to have been merely collectors of his rents.

The churchmen were not a numerous or powerful class until after the first half of the twelfth century. They were at first strangers, and many of them English. Nicolas Breakspear, the son, Matthew Paris tells us, of a peasant employed about the Benedictine monastery of Saint Albans in Hertfordshire, and educated by the monks there, was the first priest who obtained any political or social influence in Norway. He was sent there, when cardinal, on a mission to settle the Church; and afterwards, when elected pope, 1154, under the title of Hadrian IV., he was friendly to the Norwegian people. His influence when in Norway was beneficially exerted in preventing the carrying of arms, or engaging in private feuds, during certain periods of truce proclaimed by the Church. The body of priests in the peninsula until the end of the twelfth century being small, and mostly foreigners from England, both in Sweden and in Norway, shows the want of education in Latin and in the use of letters among the pagan Northmen; and shows also the identity or similarity of the language of a great portion at least of England with that of the Scandinavian peninsula.

Several of the smaller institutions in society, which were transplanted into England by the Northmen or their successors, may perhaps be traced to the mode of living which the physical circumstances of the mother-country had produced. The kings having, in fact, no safe resting-place but on board of ship, being in perpetual danger, during their progresses for subsistence on shore, to be surprised and burnt in their quarters by any trifling force, had no reluctance at all to such expeditions against England, the Hebrides, or the Orkney Islands, as they frequently undertook; and when on shore, and from necessity subsisting in guest-quarters in inland districts, we see the first rudiments of the institution of a standing army, or bodyguard, or body of hired men-at-arms. The kings, from the earliest times, appear to have kept a hird, as it was called, or court. The hirdmen were paid men-at-arms; and it appears incidentally from several passages in the sagas that they regularly mounted guard,—posted sentries round the king's quarters,—and had patrols on horseback, night and day, at some distance, to bring notice of any hostile advance. We find that Olaf Kyrre, or the Quiet, kept a body of 120 hirdmen, 60 guests,\* and 60 house-carls, for doing such

\* The guests were one division of the king's men; they were a kind of policemen, and had not the full privileges of the king's guardmen or hirdmen, although they were in the king's pay; they had their own seats in the king's hall, *the guests' bench*, their own *chief*, their own *banner*, their own *meeting*, and they formed a separate body. As the guests were lower in rank than the hirdmen, a recruit had often to serve his apprenticeship among them. See G. Vigfusson's Cleasby's Icelandic-English Dictionary, *sub voce*.

work as might be required. The standing armed force, or bodyguard, appears to have consisted of two classes of people. The hirdmen were apparently of the class udal-born to land, and consequently entitled to sit in Things at home; for they are called Thingmen, which appears to have been a title of distinction. The guest appears to have been a soldier of the unfree class; that is, not of those udal-born to land, and free of, or qualified to sit in, the Things. They appear to have been the common seamen, soldiers, and followers; for we do not find any mention of slaves ever employed under arms in any way, or in any war expeditions. The guests appear to have been inferior to the thingmen or hirdmen, as we find them employed in inferior offices, such as executing criminals or prisoners. The victories of Svein, and Canute the Great, are ascribed to the superiority of the hired bands of thingmen in their pay. The massacre of the Danes in 1002, by Ethelred, appears to have been of the regular bands of thingmen who were quartered in the towns, and who were attacked while unarmed and attending a Church festival. The hirdmen appear not only to have been disciplined and paid troops, but to have been clothed uniformly. Red was always the national colour of the Northmen, and continues still in Denmark and England the distinctive colour of their military dress. It was so of the hirdmen and people of distinction in Norway, as appears from several parts of the sagas, in the eleventh century. Olaf Kyrre, or the Quiet, appears

to have introduced, in this century, some court ceremonies or observances not used before. For each guest at the royal table he appointed a torch-bearer, to hold a candle. The butler stood in front of the king's table to fill the cups, which, we are told, before his time were of deers' horn. The court-marshal had a table, opposite to the king's, for entertaining guests of inferior dignity. The drinking was either by measure, or without measure; that is, in each horn or cup there was a perpendicular row of studs at equal distances, and each guest when the cup or horn was passed to him drank down to the stud or mark below. At night, and on particular occasions, the drinking was without measure, each taking what he pleased; and to be drunk at night appears to have been common even for the kings. Such cups with studs are still preserved in museums, and in families of the bondes. The kings appear to have wanted no external ceremonial belonging to their dignity. They were addressed in forms, still preserved in the northern languages, of peculiar respect; their personal attendants were of the highest people, and were considered as holding places of great honour. Earl Magnus the Saint was, in his youth, one of those who carried in the dishes to the royal table; and torch-bearers, hirdmen, and all who belonged to the court, were in great consideration; and it appears to have been held of importance, and of great advantage, to be enrolled among the king's hirdmen.

We may assume from the above observations,

derived from the facts and circumstances stated in various parts of the *Heimskringla*, that the intellectual and political condition of this branch of the Saxon race, while it was pagan, was not very inferior to, although very different from, that of the Anglo-Saxon branch which had been Christianised five hundred years before, and had among them the learning and organisation of the Church of Rome. They had a literature of their own; a language common to all, and in which that literature was composed; laws, institutions, political arrangements, in which public opinion was powerful; and had the elements of freedom and constitutional government. What may have been the comparative diffusion of the useful arts in the two branches in those ages? The test of the civilisation of a people, next to their intellectual and civil condition, is the state of the useful arts among them.

*Note.*—For further information in regard to the social and political condition of the old Northmen, see the *Story of Burnt Njal*, from the Icelandic of *Njals Saga*, by G. W. Dasent. This gives a vivid description of life in Iceland at the end of the tenth century, and the work contains a scholarly introduction by the learned translator. Another work of great importance in this connection is Paul B. Du Chaillu's "*The Viking Age*," just issued by John Murray, London, and by the Scribners in New York.



## CHAPTER IV.

## STATE OF THE USEFUL ARTS AMONG THE NORTHMEN.

THE architectural remains of public buildings in a country—of churches, monasteries, castles,—as they are the most visible and lasting monuments, are often taken as the only measure of the useful arts in former times. Yet a class of builders, or stone-masons, wandering from country to country, like our civil engineers and railroad contractors at the present day, may have constructed these edifices; and a people or a nobility sunk in ignorance, superstition, and sloth, may have paid for the construction, without any diffusion of the useful arts, or of combined industry, in the inert mass of population around. Gothic architecture in both its branches, Saxon and Norman, has evidently sprung from a seafaring people. The nave of the Gothic cathedral, with its round or pointed arches, is the inside of a vessel with its timbers, and merely raised upon posts, and reversed. No working model for a Gothic fabric could be given that would not be a ship turned upside down, and raised on pillars. The name of the main body of the Gothic church—the nave, *navis*, or *ship* of the building, as it is called in all the northern languages of Gothic root—shows that the wooden structure of the ship-

builder has given the idea and principles to the architect, who has only translated the wood-work into stone, and reversed it, and raised it to be the roof instead of the bottom of a fabric. The Northmen, however, can lay no claim to any attainment in architecture. The material and skill have been equally wanting among them. From the pagan times nothing in stone and lime exists of any importance or merit as a building; and the principal structure of an early age connected with Christianity, the cathedral of Throndhjem, erected in the last half of the twelfth century, cannot certainly be considered equal to the great ecclesiastical structures of Durham, York, or other English cathedrals, scarcely even to that of the same period erected in Orkney—the cathedral of Saint Magnus. We have, however, a less equivocal test of the progress and diffusion of the useful arts among the Northmen than the church-building of their Saxon contemporaries, for which they wanted the material. When we read of bands of ferocious, ignorant, pagan barbarians, landing on the coasts of England or France, let us apply a little consideration to the accounts of them, and endeavour to recollect how many of the useful arts must be in operation, and in a very advanced state too, and very generally diffused in a country, in order to fit out even a single vessel to cross the high seas, much more numerous squadrons filled with bands of fighting men. Legs, arms, and courage, the soldier and his sword, can do nothing here. We can understand multitudes of ignorant, ferocious barbarians, pressing in by land

upon the Roman empire, overwhelming countries like a cloud of locusts, subsisting, as they march along, upon the grain and cattle of the inhabitants they exterminate, and settling, with their wives and children, in new homes ; but the moment we come to the sea we come to a check. Ferocity, ignorance, and courage will not bring men across the ocean. Food, water, fuel, clothes, arms, as well as men, have to be provided, collected, transported ; and be the ships ever so rude, wood-work, iron-work, rope-work, cloth-work, cooper-work, in short almost all the useful arts, must be in full operation among a people, before even a hundred men could be transported, in any way, from the shores of Norway or Denmark to the coasts of England or France. Fixed social arrangements, too, combinations of industry working for a common purpose, laws and security of person and property, military organisation and discipline, must have been established and understood, in a way and to an extent not at all necessary to be presupposed in the case of a tumultuous crowd migrating by land to new settlements. Do the architectural remains, or the history of the Anglo-Saxon people, or of any other, in the eighth or ninth century, and down to the thirteenth, give us any reasonable ground for supposing among them so wide a diffusion of the arts of working in wood and iron, of raising or procuring by commerce flax or hemp, of the arts of making ropes, spinning and weaving sailcloth, preserving provisions, coopering water-casks, and all the other combinations of the

primary arts of civilised life, implied in the building and fitting out vessels to carry three or four hundred men across the ocean, and to be their resting-place, refuge, and home for many weeks, months, and on some of their viking cruises even for years? There is more of civilisation, and of a diffusion of the useful arts on which civilisation rests, implied in the social state of a people who could do this, than can be justly inferred from a people quarrying stones, and bringing them to the hands of a master-builder to be put together in the shape of a church or castle. Historians tell us that when Charlemagne, in the ninth century, saw some piratical vessels of the Northmen cruising at a distance in the Mediterranean, to which they had for the first time found their way, he turned away from the window, and burst into tears. Was it the barbarism of these pirates, or their civilisation, their comparative superiority in the art of navigation, and of all belonging to it, that moved him? None of the countries under his sway, none of the Christian populations of Europe in the seventh, eighth, or ninth centuries, had ships and men capable of such a voyage. The comparative state of shipbuilding and navigation, in two countries with sea-coasts, is a better test of their comparative civilisation and advance in all the useful arts than that of their church-building. Compared to Italy, Sicily, or Bavaria, Great Britain or Scandinavia, or the United States of America, would be utterly barbarous and uncivilised, if structures of stone were a measure of

the civilisation and general diffusion of the useful arts among a people. It is to be observed, also, that the ships of the Northmen in those ages did not belong to the king, or to the State, but to private adventurers and peasants, and were fitted out by them ; and were gathered by a levy or impressment, from all the country, when required for the king's service. The arts connected with the building and fitting out such ships must have been generally diffused. The fleets were not, like those of King Alfred, created by, and belonging to, the king. We need not have any great notion of the kind and size of the vessels gathered by a levy from the peasantry ; but the worst and least of them must have been seaworthy, and of a size to navigate along the coast from the most northerly district, such as Halogaland, to the Baltic,—a distance of twelve degrees of latitude ; they must have been of a size to carry and shelter men, with their provisions, clothes, and arms ; and the arms of those days required great room for stowage. Stones were an ammunition which it was necessary to carry in every ship ; because on the rocky steep coasts of Norway, or on the muddy shores of the Baltic, pebbly beaches at which this kind of ammunition could be replaced are not common. Swords, spears, battle-axes, arrowheads, bows, and bow-strings had all to be kept dry, and out of the sea-spray ; for rust and damp would make them useless as weapons. These, consequently, had to be stowed under a deck, or in chests. The shields alone could bear exposure to wet, and they appear

to have been hung outside from the rails all round the vessel ; so that they would occupy the place of quarter-cloths, or wash-boards, above the gunwale of our shipping. The stowage of their plunder also, which consisted of bulky articles, as malt, meal, grain, cattle, wool, clothes, arms taken in the forays on the coast (and they had transport vessels as well as war vessels with them on their marauding expeditions) required vessels of a considerable size. We need not suppose that, of the 1200 vessels which King Olaf in his last levy to oppose Canute the Great had assembled and brought to the Baltic, the greater number were more than large boats, of perhaps thirty feet of keel, with a forecastle deck, a cabin aft, and the centre open, and merely tilted over at night to shelter the crew. Yet to construct many hundreds of such rude craft as this,—and any kind of boat or ship below this, as a class of vessels, could not have withstood sea and weather along the coast of Norway, and across the Skager Rack to the Sound,—implies a general diffusion of the art of working in iron ; a trade in the arts of raising and smelting the ore ; and a knowledge, in every district of the country, of the smith-work and carpenter-work, and tools and handicrafts necessary for ship-building and fitting out ships for sea. We have some data in the sagas from which we can arrive at the dimensions and appearance of the larger class of vessels used by the Northmen, allowing that the ordinary vessels of the peasants gathered by a levy could be no larger or better than large herring-boats. We

have in the Saga of Olaf Trygvesson some details of the building of the Long Serpent and the Crane, some time between the years 995 and 1000. The Long Serpent is called the largest vessel that had ever been built in Norway to that time. These were long-ships, which appear to have been a denomination of ships of war, distinguishing them from last-ships, or ships for carrying cargoes. The long-ship was of much smaller breadth in proportion to the length. The long-ships appear to have been divided into two classes: dragon ships, from the figure-head probably of a dragon being used on them, and which appear to have had from twenty to thirty rowers on each side; and snekias,\* or cutters, with from ten to twenty rowers on a side. The Crane had thirty banks for rowers; and the forecastle and poop were high, and the vessel very narrow in proportion to her length. The Long Serpent had thirty-four banks for rowers, and the saga gives some interesting details concerning her. The length of her keel, we are told, that rested upon the grass, was seventy-four ells. This ell is stated by Macpherson, in his "Annals of Commerce," on the authority of Thorkelin, a learned antiquary, who was keeper of the Royal Library at Copenhagen, to have been equal to a foot and a half English measure. We have, therefore, 111 feet at the least as the length of keel of this vessel. This would be within about ten feet of the length of keel of one of our frigates of 42 guns, and of 942 tons burden, and

\* Anglo-Saxon, snace, English, smack; a kind of *swift-sailing ship* belonging to the kind of "long-ship," thus called from its swift snake-like movement in the water. See Vigfusson's *Cleasby*, *sub voce*.

of a breadth of 38 feet and a depth of 13 feet ; or, taking a steam vessel of 111 feet of keel, the extreme breadth would be 22 feet, the depth  $13\frac{1}{2}$  feet, the tonnage 296 tons, and the horse-power 120. These are dimensions and proportions given for 111 feet of keel in the able articles on shipbuilding and on steam navigation in the "Encyclopædia Britannica." The Long Serpent, being a rowing as well as sailing vessel, would have as much rake of stem and stern as a steamer ; and would be as long on deck. She is described as of good breadth, but the breadth is not stated ; well timbered, for which the saga refers to the knees for supporting the beams, which were then to be seen ; and with thirty-four benches or banks for rowers, which would be the beams in a modern vessel. One of our long large steam vessels, with high poop deck and forecastle deck, low waist, and small breadth, would probably have very nearly the same appearance in the water as such a vessel as the Long Serpent ; only, instead of paddle-boxes and wheels on each side, there would be thirty-four oars out on each side between the forecastle and the poop. The Northmen appear by the saga to have been lavish in gilding and painting their vessels. One of these long low war-ships of the vikings, with a gilded head representing a dragon on the stem, and a gilded representation of its tail at the stern curling over the head of the steersman, with a row of shining red and white shields hung over the rails all round from stem to stern, representing its scaly sides, and thirty oars on each side giving it motion



and representing its legs, must have been no inapt representation of the ideal figure of a dragon creeping over the blue calm surface of a narrow gloomy fiord, sunk deep, like some abode for unearthly creatures, between precipices of bare black rock, which shut out the full light of day. Dragon was a name for a class or size of war-ships, but each had its own name. The Crane, the Little Serpent, the Long Serpent, the Bison, and other vessels of about thirty banks for rowers, are mentioned ; and vessels of from twenty to twenty-five banks appear to have been common among the considerable bondes, and cutters of ten or fifteen banks to have been the ordinary class of vessels of all who went on sea. A vessel of thirty or thirty-four banks for rowers would have that number of oars out on each side, and not fifteen or seventeen only on each side ; because the breadth of such a vessel would be sufficient to give two rowers, sitting midships, a sufficient length of lever between their hands and the fulcrum at the gunwales on either side, to wield and work any length of oar that could be advantageous : but in the smaller class of vessels of ten or fifteen oars it is likely that one oar only was worked on each bank, as in our men-of-war's boats, the whole breadth of the vessel being required for the portion of the lever or oar within the fulcrum or gunwale. Under the feet of the rowers, in the waist of the vessel, the chests of arms, stones for casting, provisions, clothing, and goods, have been stowed, and protected by a deck of movable hatches. Upon

this lower deck the crew appear to have slept at night, sheltered from the weather by a tilt or awning, when not landed and under tents on the beach for the night. Ship-tents are mentioned in the outfit of vessels as being of prime necessity, as much as ship-sails. In the voyages in the sagas, we read of fleets collected in the north of Norway, from Thronthjem, and even from Halogaland, sailing south along the coast every summer as far as the Sound, and thence into the Baltic, or along the coast of Jutland and Slesvik, and thence over to Britain, or to the other coasts. The major part of the vessels appear to have taken a harbour every night, or to have been laid, on the coast of Norway, close to the rocks, in some sheltered spot, with cables on the land, or with the fore-foot of the vessel touching the beach; and the people either landed and set up tents on shore, or made a tilt on board by striking the mast, and laying the tilt cloths or sails over it. The large open vessels which at present carry the dried fish from the Lofoden isles to Bergen, although open for the sake of stowage, are of a size to carry masts of forty feet long which are struck by the crew when not under sail, there being no standing rigging, and only one large square-sail. This appears to have been the rig and description of all the ancient vessels, great or small, of the Northmen. They appear to have had a certain show and luxury about their sails; for we read of them having stripes of white, red, and blue cloths; and we read of Sigurd the Crusader waiting for a fortnight at the mouth of

the Dardanelles with a fair wind for going up the strait, until he got a wind with which he could sail up with the sails trimmed fore and aft in his ships, that the inhabitants on shore might see the splendour of his sails. These large rowing vessels had one advantage belonging only to steam vessels in our times, that they could back out of seen dangers; and being under command of oars, and with small draught of water, shallows, rocks, and lee shores were not such formidable dangers to them as to our sailing vessels. Many important towns in those times, as, for instance, all our Cinque Ports, appear to have been situated rather with a reference originally to a good convenience for beaching such vessels, than to good sheltered harbours for riding at anchor in. The whole coast of the peninsula, from the North Cape round to Tornea, is protected from the main ocean by an almost continuous belt of islands, islets, rocks, and half-tide reefs, or skerries, within which the navigation is comparatively smooth, although very intricate for vessels with sails only. This inland passage "within the skerries" is used now, even in winter, by small boats going to the cod-fishing in the Lofoden isles from the Bergen district. It is only at particular openings, as at the mouths of the great fiords, that this continuous chain of sheltering isles and rocks is broken, and that the eye of the ocean, as the Norwegian fishermen express it, looks in upon the land. By waiting opportunities to cross these openings vessels of a small class, we may suppose, have accompanied King Olaf in his

foray to the Danish islands, in hopes of booty more profitable than fish; and we need not believe his fleet of 1200 vessels raised by his levy to have been all of a large class. When his son Magnus the Good went to Denmark to claim the crown, upon the death of Hardicanute of England, in consequence of an agreement that the survivor of the two should succeed to the heritage of the other, he is stated to have had seventy large vessels with him, by which we may suppose vessels of twenty banks or upwards, such as the considerable bondes possessed, to be meant; and this number probably expresses more correctly the number of large ships then in the country. The size of the war-vessels appears to have been reckoned by the banks, or by the rooms between two banks of oars. Each room or space, we may gather from the sagas, was the berth of eight men, and was divided into half-rooms, starboard and larboard, of four men for working the corresponding oars. When the ships were advancing two men worked the oar, one covered them with his shield from the enemy's missiles, and one shot at the enemy. When the ships got into line, they were bound together by their stems and sterns; and the forecastles and poops, which were decked, and raised high in the construction of their vessels, and sometimes with temporary stages or castles on them, were the posts of the fighting men. The main manœuvre seems to have consisted in laying the high forecastles and poops favourably for striking down with stones, arrows, and casting spears, upon a lower vessel. They used

grappling-irons for throwing into the enemy's ship, and dragging her towards them. But these and similar observations will occur to the reader of the many sea-fights recounted in the *Heimskringla*.

One of the most indispensable articles for a large vessel,—one for which no substitute can be found, and which cannot be produced single-handed, but requires the co-operation of many branches of industry,—is the anchor. Boats may be anchored by a stone, or a hook of strong wood sunk by a heavy stone attached to it; but vessels of from 50 to 111 feet of keel, such as the war-ships and last-ships of the Northmen, must have carried anchors of from ten to fifteen hundredweight at the least, and we read of their riding out heavy gales. To forge, or procure in any way such anchors, betokens a higher state of the useful arts among these pagan Northmen than we usually allow them.\* Iron is the mother of all the useful arts; and a people who could smelt iron from the ore, and work it into all that is required for ships of considerable size, from a nail to an anchor, could not have been in a state of such utter barbarism as they are represented to us. We may fairly doubt of their gross ignorance and want of civilisation in their pagan state, when we find they had a literature of their own, and laws, institutions, social arrangements, a spirit and character very analogous to the English, if not the source from which the English flowed; and

\* The Museum of Northern Antiquities at Copenhagen contains many articles, both of ornament and use, which display great ingenuity and good workmanship in metal, and betoken a considerable division of trades and of labour in their production, even in the earliest times.—L.

were in advance of all the Christian nations in one branch at least of the useful arts, in which great combinations of them are required—the building, fitting out, and navigating large vessels.\*

\* Since the above was written two magnificent viking ships have been unearthed in Norway, and can be seen by the traveller in Christiania. An illustration of the Gokstad ship found in 1880 will be found in P. B. Du Chaillu's "Viking Age," in which the archæology of the North, the articles of ornament and use, are discussed and exhibited in illustrations. In "The Viking Age," Du Chaillu has described from the sagas and the finds in the museums the life of the old Norseman from the cradle to the grave, from his birth to his funeral, and his work is a lasting monument to the high civilisation of the ancient Scandinavians.

## CHAPTER V.

OF THE DISCOVERY OF GREENLAND AND AMERICA BY  
THE NORTHMEN.

THE discovery of Greenland by the Icelanders about the year 984, and the establishment of considerable colonies on one or on both sides of that vast peninsula which terminates at Cape Farewell,—in which Christianity and Christian establishments, parishes, churches, and even monasteries, were flourishing, or at least existing to such an extent that from 1112 to 1409 there was a regular succession of bishops, of whom seventeen are named, for their superintendence,—are facts which no longer admit of any reasonable doubt. The documentary evidence of the saga,—which gave not merely vague accounts of such a discovery and settlement, but statistical details, with the names and the distances from each other of farms or townships, of which there were, according to accounts of the fourteenth century, ninety in what was called Vestribygd or the western settlement, with three churches, and 190 in the Eystribygd or eastern settlement, with one cathedral, eleven other churches, two towns, and two monasteries,—bears all the internal evidence of truth, in the consistency and simplicity of the statements. The saga accounts

also are supported by the incidental notice of Greenland by contemporary writers. Adam of Bremen mentions that the people of Greenland, among other northern people, sent to his diocesan, Adalbert archbishop of Bremen, who died in 1075, for clergymen, who accordingly were sent to them. The first bishop of Greenland mentioned in the Icelandic accounts was Arnold, who was ordained by the archbishop of Lund, in Scania, in 1124. The bishopric of Greenland was afterwards under the archbishop of Thronthjem; and Alf, or Alfus, who is supposed to have died about 1378 in Greenland, is the last who is known to have officiated there. In 1389, Henry, according to Torfæus, was appointed bishop; and in 1406 Askel was appointed to succeed Henry, in case he was dead. But it does not appear, according to Torfæus, that either of them ever reached Greenland; but, since Torfæus's time, a document is said to have been discovered relative to a marriage settlement executed at Gardar, the name of the town or episcopal seat in Greenland, by the last bishop, whose name was Eindride Andreson, not Askel, three years later, viz., in 1409. In 1261, the Greenland settlements appear to have been regularly annexed to the crown of Norway by King Hakon Hakonson, who sent messengers to the people of Greenland; and in the submission which the messengers brought back, it was agreed "that all fines for murders, whether committed by Norwegian or Greenland people, on inhabited or uninhabited land, or even under the pole itself, should be paid to the king."



The payments for murders, or other capital offences compounded for by mulcts to the king and relations, were then a considerable branch of the royal revenues. In 1388-9, Henry the bishop, on setting out for Greenland received instructions to keep the king's revenues safely warehoused in a certain fixed place, those years in which no vessels came to Greenland; which shows that the communications with Iceland were not yearly or regular. A brief of Pope Nicholas V., in 1448, to the bishops of Skalholt and Holar in Iceland, states "that his beloved children dwelling in an island called Greenland, on the utmost verge of the ocean north of Norway, and who are under the archbishop of Thronthjem, have raised his compassion by their complaint that after having been Christians for 600 years, and converted by the holy Saint Olaf, and having erected many sacred buildings and a splendid cathedral on said island, in which divine service was diligently performed, they had thirty years ago been attacked by the heathens of the neighbouring coast, who came with a fleet against them, and killed and dispersed many, and made slaves of those who were able-bodied; but having now gathered together again, they crave the services of priests and a bishop." The pope therefore desires those bishops, as the nearest, to consult with their diocesan, if the distance permit, and to send the Greenland people a suitable man to be their bishop. The sudden extinction of a colony, which must have attained considerable importance and population to have

had a regular succession of bishops for 250 years, is much more extraordinary than its establishment. It vanished, as it were, from the face of the earth, about the end of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century; and even the memory of its former existence passed away. The Christian colony established in the tenth century in Greenland, with its churches, monasteries, bishops, was considered, notwithstanding the internal and the collateral evidence supporting the sagas, to be a pious delusion of the Middle Ages, founded on a mere saga fable. The fable itself is short, and appears to have nothing fabulous in it. In the beginning of the tenth century, an Ice-lander or a Norwegian, called Gunbiorn, son of Ulf Krage, was driven by a storm to the west of Iceland, and discovered some rocks, which he called Gunbiorn Skerry, and a great country, of which he brought the news to Iceland. Soon after one Eirik Red, or Eirik the Red, was condemned at Thorsnes Thing, in Iceland, to banishment for a murder he had committed. He fitted out a vessel, and told his friends he would go and find the land which Gunbiorn had seen, and come back and let them know what kind of country it was. Eirik sailed west from the Snowfieldsjokul, in Iceland, to the east coast of Greenland, and then followed the coast southwards, looking for a convenient place for dwelling in. He sailed westward round a cape which he called Hvarf,\* and passed the first winter on an island,

\* Hvarf appears a name given to extreme capes from which the coast turns or bends in a different direction. Cape Wrath, the extreme westerly

which from him was called Eirik's Isle. After passing three years in examining the coast he returned to Iceland, and gave such a fine account of the country that it was called Greenland; and the following year twenty-five vessels with colonists set out with him to settle in it, but only about one half reached their destination, some having turned back, and some being lost in the ice. About fourteen years after Eirik was settled in Greenland, his son Leif, who afterwards discovered Vinland, went over to Norway to King Olaf Trygvesson, who had him instructed in Christianity, or baptized, and sent a priest with him to Greenland, who baptized Eirik and all the colonists. Many came over from Iceland from time to time, and the country was settled wherever it was inhabitable. In this account there is nothing incredible or inconsistent. Greenland was to Iceland what Iceland had been to Norway—a place of refuge for the surplus population, for those who had no land or means of living. Iceland was originally an aristocratic republic,—a settlement made by people of family and wealth, who alone could fit out vessels for emigrating to it; and these landnammen took possession of the land. Of the lower class many in course of time must have become retainers, tenants, or workpeople under the higher class, and have been ready to emigrate to a country where they could get land of their own, and at a distance little more than half of that from

point of the coast of Scotland, has originally been called Hvarf, and in time changed to *Wrath*.—L.

Norway to Iceland. The discovery and colonisation of land within a distance so short, compared to the usual voyage from Iceland to Norway, is not incredible, nor wonderful. The means of subsistence in both countries have probably been very much the same. Seals, whales, fish of various kinds, reindeer, hares, wild fowl, would give subsistence; oil, skins, feathers, furs—which in the middle age were in great estimation for dress,—would give surplus products for exchange. Cattle, if we may believe the sagas, were kept in considerable numbers. Corn was not produced in either country. The balance of the natural products which man may subsist on,—such as game, reindeer, seals, fish, and of furs and feathers for barter,—may have been even in favour of Greenland. The extinction of such a colony, after existing for 400 years, is certainly more extraordinary than its establishment, and almost justifies the doubt whether it ever had existed. Several causes are given for this extraordinary circumstance. One is the gradual accumulation of ice on both sides of this vast peninsula, by which not only the pasturages, and temperature in which cattle could subsist, may have been diminished, and with these one main branch of the subsistence of the population; but also the direct communication with small vessels coasting along the shores and through the sounds of Greenland may have been interrupted, and the voyage round Cape Farewell outside of the isles, and ice, and sounds have been too tempestuous for such vessels as they possessed. Another cause was

probably the great pestilence called the black death, which appeared in Europe about 1349, and which seems to have been more universal and destructive than the cholera, the plague, or any other visitation known in the history of the human race. It extinguished entirely populations much more numerous, and more wholesomely fed, clothed, and lodged, than we can suppose a colony in Greenland to have been, and it seems to have raged particularly in the north. It is supposed by some that this pestilence either swept off the whole population of the colony, or weakened it so much that the survivors were at last cut off by the Skrælings or Esquimaux, with whom the colonists appear to have been always in hostility. The inequality between the most contemptible race of savages and the most civilised people of Europe would be but small, or the advantage probably on the side of the uncivilised, in all warfare between them before the use of fire-arms; which, next to Christianity, has been the great means of diffusing and securing civilisation among the human race. The pope's brief of 1448, if it be a genuine document,—and it is said to have been found in the archives of the Vatican by a Professor Mallet some years ago, but how he got there is not shown,—would prove the truth of the conjecture which has been made, that the colonists were overpowered by the Skrælings. The existing traditions among the Esquimaux,\* of their having come in

\* The Esquimaux appear, by the narrative of his discoveries on the north coast of America by the late Mr. Thomas Simpson (1843), to be

their canoes and surprised and killed all the Kabloon or European people in old times, is not worth much, as evidently it is a tradition only of the moment produced by leading questions put to them. No tradition in any country seems to exist but as an impersonation, as an account of an individual person doing a thing; and it is the individual and his personal feats, not the great act itself, that is delivered by tradition as its principal subject matter. Another cause was, that Queen Margaret, on whom the three northern crowns had devolved in 1387, had made the trade to Greenland, Iceland, the Farey Isles, Halogaland, and Finland, a royal monopoly, which could only be carried on in ships belonging to, or licenced by, the sovereign; and certain merchants who had visited Greenland about that time were accused of a treasonable violation of the royal edict, we are told by Torfæus in his "*Grænlandia Antiqua*," and only escaped punishment by pleading that stress of weather had driven them to those parts. Her successor, Eirik of Pomerania, was too much engaged in Swedish affairs, and his successor, Christopher of Bavaria, in his contests with the Hanseatic League, to think of the colony of Greenland. Under the monopoly of trade the Icelanders could have no vessels, and no object for sailing to Greenland; and the vessels fitted out by government, or its lessees, to trade with them, would only be ready to leave Denmark or Bergen

by no means the poor physically weak people met with at present in Davis's Straits, and described by Captain Parry.—L.

for Iceland, at the season they ought to have been ready to leave Iceland to go to Greenland. The colony gradually fell into oblivion. Its former existence even had become a matter of disputed or neglected tradition. Christian III., who came to the throne 1534, abolished the prohibition of sailing to Greenland; and a few feeble attempts were made at discovery by him and his successors from time to time, and at last even these were given up. It was not until 1721 that a Norwegian minister, Hans Egede,—one of those rare men who go on to their purpose unmoved by any selfish interest, and to whom fame, wealth, honour, comfort, are neither object nor reward,—resigned his living in Norway, and obtained permission, after much difficulty and many petitions to government, to settle himself as a missionary on the coast of Davis's Straits among the Esquimaux. The general opinion was, that the lost colony of Old Greenland was situated on the east coast of the peninsula, and not within Davis's Straits; and it does not appear that Hans Egede himself, at first, had any idea that he was settling upon the ruined seats of Christian predecessors of the same tongue and mother country. It is a curious paragraph in the history of the human race, showing how true it is that in the tide of time man and his affairs return to where they set out,—that Christian churches, bishops, and consequently people in some numbers, and in some state of civilisation, had existed, been extinguished, and forgotten, and again on the same spot, after the lapse of 400 years,

men have attempted to live, colonise, and Christianise. The feeble attempt in our times, the struggle to subsist, and the trifling amount of population in the modern colony after a century, are strangely in contrast with the state of the old colony. There are but about 150 Europeans at present in these Danish colonies; and the whole population of the natives, from Cape Farewell as far north as man can live, is reckoned under 6000 people, and about five or six vessels only are employed in trading with them; and this is in a country which formerly subsisted a population of European descent, which had at least sixteen ecclesiastical establishments or parishes, a bishop, monasteries, and consequently a number greatly exceeding 150 souls. The old colonists do not appear to have ever made converts among the natives, and their numbers, which must at one time have been considerable, appear to have found abundant subsistence; for we read in the sagas of vessels with sixty men arriving in autumn, being subsisted all winter, and fitted out in spring, and victualled for voyages of uncertain and long duration: and now if one of the vessels fitted out by charitable contributions by the sect of the Moravians to carry food to their missionaries be delayed for a season, they are in danger of starving. Is it man or nature that has changed? Are men less vigorous, less energetic, less enduring and hardy, than in those old times of the Northmen? or is the land, the sea, the climate less adapted now for the subsistence of the human animal?



The opinion of almost all antiquaries was, that the main settlement of the old colonists,—the Eystribygd, with its 190 gards (farms), its town of Gardar, its cathedral, bishop's seat, and twelve or thirteen churches,—was on the east coast of Greenland, somewhere on the coast north of Cape Farewell, inaccessible now from ice; and the less important Vestribygd to have been west of Cape Farewell, within Davis's Straits. Others supposed that both settlements were on the east coast of Greenland, and that the old colonists did not know that Greenland had a west coast from Cape Farewell. The opinions were founded on certain ancient sailing directions found in the sagas, especially in a saga of King Olaf Trygvesson, in which it is mentioned that from Stad, the westernmost part of Norway, it is a voyage of seven days' sailing due west to Hornpoint, the easternmost part of Iceland; and that from Snowfieldnes, the point of Iceland nearest to Greenland, it is a voyage of four days' sailing, also due west, to Greenland: and a rock called Gunbiornskerry is stated to be half-way between Iceland and Greenland; but this course, says one of the ancient accounts of unknown date, but certainly of the fourteenth century, "was the old way of sailing; but now the ice from the northern gulf has set down so near to this skerry, that nobody can take this course without danger of life." This rock, skerry, or isle, midway between the coast of Iceland and that of Greenland, is proved by Scoresby and other navigators to have no existence; and the east coast of

Greenland, as far as it has been possible to explore it, is found to be more inclement, icebound, and in every way less adapted naturally to afford subsistence to man, than the west coast within Cape Farewell; although the Eystribygd is represented in all the sagas as the most populous settlement, having 190, and the other only 90 gards. It is now generally admitted that the east coast of Greenland never was inhabited at all by the old colonists; that their east and west settlements had no reference to being east or west of Cape Farewell, but to being easterly or westerly from some place within Davis's Straits, and which formed their division between the two settlements; and in this view the east settlement would be the country nearest to Cape Farewell, and as at present, the best provided with the natural means of subsistence; and the western and poorer settlement would be the country beyond it to the north; and that Gunbiornskerry was not in the midway, or halfway, as it had been interpreted, in the sea between Iceland and Greenland, but some island on the east coast of Greenland, which was half-way, in point of distance and time, between Iceland and the eastern settlement in Greenland. From it they took a new departure, and coasted along, with sails and oars, round Cape Hvarf, or Cape Farewell, and up Davis's Straits to the eastern settlement. Hans Egede, his son Paul, and others, had from time to time examined and sent home accounts of remains of ancient buildings which they had found on their missionary excursions. Arctander,

as early as 1777, had made reports of such remains. The Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen took up the subject with great zeal in this century ; and researches have been made of which the result is a kind of synthetic proof, as it may be called, of the veracity of the saga. The remains of former inhabitation of the country, of houses, paths, walls, stepping-stones, churches, foundations of rows of dwellings, show that the saga accounts have not been exaggerated ; and it must give every fair unprejudiced reader a confidence which he had not before in the sagas when he finds in this—the most questionable perhaps of all the saga statements—that a considerable Icelandic colony actually had existed in Greenland from the tenth century. The facts they state are fully supported by the discoveries made on the spot within this century. A similar moral confidence in the sagas is given to the few saga readers who happen to be acquainted with the Orkney Islands, from finding, in the Orkneyinga Saga, a minute and accurate knowledge of places, distances, names, and other details of the localities mentioned. In this case of Greenland the remains discovered carry conviction to all. At Karkortok, a branch of a long fiord called Igalikko, in latitude  $60^{\circ} 50'$  north, and longitude  $44^{\circ} 37'$ , near to the settlement of Julianahope, is a ruin of a building 51 feet in length by 25 feet in breadth, with well-built stone walls, 4 feet thick, standing to the height of 16 and 18 feet ; and with two round arched windows, one in each gable, and four other windows

not arched, on each side, and with two door-ways,—evidently intended for a church. This appears the most perfect of the ruins yet discovered. Foundations, with walls in some parts 4 feet high, have been found of buildings 120 feet in length by 100 feet in breadth; and from such rows being found in various places, the families may be supposed to have lived in contiguous houses. But single dwellings also have been used, as foundations overgrown with dwarf-willow, and the berry-bearing shrubs, are found in favourable situations on the sides of the fiords. In what appears to have been a church, the foundations being 96 feet long by 48 feet broad, at the extremity of the fiord Igalikko, latitude  $60^{\circ} 55'$ , a stone with a Runic inscription was found in 1830; and to the readers of Runic the inscription offered no difficulty:—"Vigdis, M. D. Hvilir Her. Glæde Gud Sal Hennar;" that is, "Vigdis rests here: God bless her soul." The meaning of the letters M. D. following the name, and which probably refer to the person's family, as Magnus's Daughter, or some similar distinctive use, form the only obscurity. In 1831 the missionary De Fries found near Igigeitum, in latitude  $60^{\circ}$ , a tombstone used as a door lintel to a Greenland house, with an inscription in Roman characters—"Her Hvilir Hro Kolgrims;" which is, "Here rests Hroar or Hroaldr Kolgrimson." But the most interesting of these inscriptions is one discovered in 1824, in the island Kingiktorsoak in Baffin's Bay, in latitude  $72^{\circ} 55'$  north, longitude  $56^{\circ} 5'$  west of Greenwich; as it shows how bold these

Northmen have been in their seamanship, and how far they had penetrated into regions supposed to have been unvisited by man before the voyages of our modern navigators. It now appears that Captain Parry and Captain Lyon had only sailed over seas which had been explored by these Northmen in the twelfth century. The inscription found in this high latitude was sent to three of the greatest antiquaries and Runic scholars in Europe—Finn Magnusen, Professor Rask, and Dr. Bryniulfson in Iceland; and, without communication with each other, they arrived at the same interpretation, viz. “Erling Sighvatson and Biarne Thordarson and Eindrid Oddson, on Saturday before Ascension Week, raised these marks and cleared ground, 1135.” The meaning is, that in token of having taken possession of the land, they had raised marks or mounds of which Kragh and Stephenson observed some vestiges on the spot where the inscription was found, and had cleared a space of ground around, being a symbol of appropriation of the land. The interesting part of this inscription has not been sufficiently noticed and examined. In the Romish church the days of the Ascension Week are of peculiar solemnity. The priests, accompanied by the people, walk in long processions with lighted torches around the churches and consecrated ground, chanting, and sprinkling holy water. From the numerous processions going on at this festival, the Ascension Week was called the Gang Dayis, or Ganging Dayis, in old Scotch,—is still called the Gang Week in some parts of

England,—was called Gang Dagas in Anglo-Saxon, —and Ascension Day, Gagn Dagr in the Icelandic; and the going in procession, not the Gagn or Gain of Spiritual Victory, has given the name to the Dies Victoriæ in the northern languages. It appears that there are two festivals which might be called Gagn Dagr in the Romish church, from their being celebrated by processions: one is the Dies Victoriæ Maximus, about the 24th of April; the other procession day is about the 14th of May; and the Laukardakin fyrir Gakndag of the inscription may be the Saturday before either of these procession days. But, to whichever it refers, the people who made these marks at that time of the year must have wintered upon the island. By the accounts of all northern voyagers, the sea in Baffin's Bay is not navigable at or near Ascension Week, or any church festival to which Gagn Dagr applies. We must either suppose that these Northmen, without any of our modern outfit of ships for wintering in such high latitudes, did not only winter there, but found the country so endurable as to take possession of it by a formal act indicating an intention to settle in the island; or we must suppose that the cold, within so recent an historical period as 800 years ago, has increased so much in the northern parts of the globe, that countries are now uninhabitable by man which were formerly not so. Both, perhaps, may be taken into account. The capability of enduring cold or heat in extreme degrees may be acquired by individuals or tribes, and the habits and functions of

the body become adapted to the temperature. The advance of ice locally in Davis's Straits, and on the east coast of Greenland, seems also ascertained by the yearly increase of the fields of ice in the neighbouring seas within the experience of our whale fishers.

The discovery of America, or Vinland, in the eleventh century, by the same race of enduring enterprising seamen, is not less satisfactorily established by documentary evidence than the discovery and colonisation of Greenland; but it rests entirely upon documentary evidence, which cannot, as in the case of Greenland, be substantiated by anything to be discovered in America. One or two adventurers made voyages, came to new countries to the south and west of Greenland, landed, repeated their visits, and even remained for one or two years trading for skins with the natives, and felling timber to take home in their ships; but they established no colony, left none behind them to multiply, and, as in Greenland, to construct, in stone, memorials of their existence on the coast of America. All that can be proved, or that is required to be proved, for establishing the priority of the discovery of America by the Northmen, is that the saga or traditional account of these voyages in the eleventh century was committed to writing at a known date, viz., between 1387 and 1395, in a manuscript of unquestionable authenticity, of which these particular sagas or accounts relative to Vinland form but a small portion; and that this known date was eighty years before Columbus visited

Iceland to obtain nautical information, viz., in 1477, when he must have heard of this written account of Vinland ; and it was not till 1492 that he discovered America. This simple fact, established on documents altogether incontrovertible, is sufficient to prove all that is wanted to be proved, or can be proved, and is much more clearly and ably stated by Thormod Torfæus, the great antiquary of the last century, than it has been since, in his very rare little tract, "*Historia Vinlandiæ Antiquæ*, 1707." This, however, has not been thought sufficient by modern antiquaries, and great research and talent have been expended in overlaying this simple documentary fact, on which alone the claim of the Icelanders to the priority of discovery rests, with a mass of documents of secondary importance and no validity. These are of secondary importance ; because the circumstances which led to or happened upon these voyages, the family descent, or even identity of the adventurers, and the truth or falsehood of the details related, do not either confirm or shake the simple fact on which everything rests,—that a discovery of a new land to the west and south was made and recorded, taken out of the mere traditionary state, and fixed in writing in 1387, or 100 years before Columbus's first voyage. They are of no validity ; because, after Columbus's first voyage in 1492, the seafaring people in every country would be talking of and listening to accounts of discoveries, new or old,—imagination would be let loose,—and old sagas would be filled up and new invented ; so that no document relative



to this question is of real validity which is not proved at setting out to be older than 1492,—that is to say, not merely an older story which may have circulated in the traditionary state from the tenth or eleventh century, but older than 1492, on paper or parchment. Saga antiquaries are sometimes given to confounding together in their speculations these two very distinct ages of their documents. The only document of this kind is the one pointed out by Torfæus in 1707, which is in itself good and sufficient, and beyond all suspicion; and to link it to documents of uncertain or suspicious date, or to details which may or may not be true, and which require the aid of imagination, prejudice, or good will to believe, as well as of sober judgment, is weakening, not strengthening, the argument. Torfæus kindled a light which the moths have gathered about, and almost put out.

In 1697 Peringskiöld published the “*Heimskringla*” of Snorre Sturlason, with a Latin and Swedish translation of the Icelandic. It was discovered and pointed out by Torfæus, that Peringskiöld must have had some inferior manuscript of the work before him, because eight chapters of the Saga of King Olaf Trygvesson, viz., from chapter 105 to chapter 113, are interpolated, and are not to be found in any genuine manuscript of Snorre’s work. These eight chapters contain the accounts of the voyages of Leif and of Thorfin Karlsefne to Vinland. There is internal evidence in Snorre’s work itself that these eight chapters are a clumsy interpolation

by Peringskiöld, or his authority; for they interrupt Snorre's narrative in the most interesting period of King Olaf Trygvesson's life, and have no connection with the transactions or personages preceding or following; whereas all Snorre's episodes are, with surprising art and judgment, connected with what goes before or is to follow, and are brought in exactly at the right place. It may be thought, at first sight, that the very circumstance of a man of Snorre's knowledge and judgment in the sagas not knowing, or knowing not adopting, the account of the discovery of Vinland given in these eight chapters subsequently interpolated in his work, is conclusive against their value and authenticity. But it is to be remembered that although he probably knew of them, the subject was altogether foreign to his work. Vinland was an object of no interest in his days, and had not, like Greenland, Iceland, the Farey Isles, or Orkney, been occupied as a colony, or part of the dominions of Norway, and had not employed any of the historical personages of whom he treats; and therefore it would have been inconsistent with his work to introduce the obscure, and in his time unimportant fact, of the discovery of new land, or the adventures of the discoverers. The eight chapters in question, by whomsoever they were interpolated into Snorre Sturlason's work, proved to be taken, with few variations, and none of any importance, from the eighth chapter of the Saga of King Olaf Trygvesson in the "Codex Flateyensis." This saga gives more details of the reign of that king than

Snorre Sturlason's saga of it, and is no doubt the source from which he drew his account, using it often verbatim.

The "Flateyar Annall, or Codex Flateyensis," by far the most important of Icelandic manuscripts, takes its name from the island Flatey, in Breidafjord in Iceland, where it had been long preserved, and where Bishop Brynjolf Sveinsson of Skalholt purchased it, about 1650, from the owner, Jonas Torfason, for King Frederic III., giving in exchange for it the perpetual exemption from land-tax of a small estate of the owner. The manuscript is in large folio, beautifully written on parchment. On the first page stands—"This book is owned by Ion Hakonson. Here are, first, songs; then how Norway was inhabited or settled; then of Eirik Vidforle (the far-travelled); thereafter Olaf Trygvesson, and all his deeds\*; then next the Saga of King Olaf the Saint, with all his deeds, and therewith the sagas of the Orkney Earls; then the saga of Sverre, and thereafter the saga of Hakon the Old, with the sagas of King Magnus his son; then are deeds of Einar Sokkeson of Greenland, thereafter of Helge and Ulf the Bad; then begin annals from the time the world was made, showing all to this present time that is come. The priest Ion Thordarson has written from Eirik Vidforle, and the two sagas of the Olafs; and priest Magnus Thorhalson has written

\* Thattr does not exactly mean deeds, but excerpts or short accounts of deeds. We use in Scotland the expression, "a tait o' woo,"—a little wool pulled out of a fleece; which corresponds to the Icelandic thattr, an excerpt.—L.

from thence, and also what is written before, and has illuminated the whole. God Almighty and the Holy Virgin Mary bless those who wrote, and him who dictated." The writer of this paragraph says, that the annals written out by the priest Magnus Thorhalson from the beginning of the world come down to the present time, and he has consequently been a contemporary of the scribe Magnus Thorhalson. These annals end with the year 1395, and the time at which the writing was concluded is thus distinctly ascertained. The time at which the writing was commenced is also distinctly ascertained; for in the piece on "how Norway was inhabited," in giving the series of kings, it is said, on coming to King Olaf Hakonson, "He was king when this book was writing; and then were elapsed from the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ 1300 and 80 and 7 years." The dates of the beginning and ending of this beautiful piece of penmanship are thus fixed, and the handwriting of each of the scribes perfectly known. The <sup>A</sup>Codex Flateyensis" is not an original work of one author, but a collection of sagas transcribed from older manuscripts, and arranged in so far chronologically that the accounts are placed under the reign in which the events they tell of happened, although not connected with it or with each other. Under the saga of Olaf Trygvesson are comprehended the sagas of the Farey Islands; of the Vikings of Jomsburg; of Eirik Red, and Leif his son, the discoverers of Greenland and Vinland; and the voyages of Thorfin Karlsefne to Vinland, and all the circum-

stances, true or false, of their adventures. It is evident that the main fact is that of a discovery of a western land being recorded in writing between 1387 and 1395; and whether the minor circumstances, such as the personal adventures of the discoverers, or the exact localities in America which they visited, be or be not known, cannot affect this fact,—nor the very strong side fact, that eighty years after this fact was recorded in writing, in no obscure manuscript, but in one of the most beautiful works of penmanship in Europe, Columbus came to Iceland\* from Bristol, in 1477, on purpose to gain nautical information, and must have heard of the written accounts of discoveries recorded in it. It is as great an error to prove too much as to prove too little. Enough is proved for the purpose of establishing the priority of discovery; but when the northern antiquaries proceed to prove the details,—to establish the exact points in the state of Massa-

\* The English trade with Iceland appears to have been very considerable. Annals in manuscript of 1411 and 1413, quoted by Finn Magnusen, in his Treatise on the English Trade to Iceland in the "Nordisk Tidsskrift for Oldkyndighed," mention, besides plundering and piracy committed by the English, proclamations of Eirik of Pomerania against trading with them. In 1413 there were thirty English vessels on the Iceland coast. In 1415, in the harbour of Hafnarfiord there were six English vessels at one time. The trade had been made a monopoly, and the English appear to have forcibly broken through its regulations, in spite of the proclamations of their own and the Norwegian sovereign. The Icelandic bishops at that time—viz., Jon Jonson, bishop of Holar, and his successor in 1429, Jon Williamson—were Englishmen; and also the bishop of Skalholt in 1430, John Garrikson, appears to have come from England. Bristol and Hull appear, in 1474, to have had a great share of the trade to Iceland. It appears, from the Memoir of Columbus by his son Fernando, that in February, 1477, his father visited Tyle (Thule) or Friesland, "an island as large as England with which the English, especially those of Bristol, drive a great trade."

chusetts at which Leif put up his wooden booths, and where Thorfin Karlsefne and his wife Gudrid lived, and Freydis committed her wholesale slaughter, and to make imaginary discoveries of Runic inscriptions and buildings erected by Northmen in Rhode Island,—they are poets, not antiquaries. The subject is of so much interest both in Europe and America, and so much has been written in very expensive books to prove what is not susceptible of proof, and of no importance, if proved, that a few pages must be bestowed on it.

From the adventurous spirit of the Northmen in the eleventh century,—from their habits of living on board ship, on their ordinary viking cruises, for many more weeks and months together than are required for a voyage from Iceland to America,—from their being at home on board, and accustomed on their sea expeditions up the Mediterranean, to the White Sea, and to Iceland direct across the ocean,

It is a curious coincidence that he mentions he came to the island without meeting any ice, and the sea was not frozen; and in an authentic document of March in the same year, 1477, it is mentioned as a kind of testimony of the act of which the document is the protocol, that there was no snow whatever upon the ground at the date it was executed,—a rare circumstance, by which it would be held in remembrance. In the year 1477, Magnus Eyjolfson was bishop of Skalholt: he had been abbot of the monastery at Helgafel, where the old accounts concerning Vinland and Greenland were, it is supposed, originally written and preserved, and the discoverers were people originally from that neighbourhood. Columbus came in spring to the south end of Iceland, where Whalefjord was the usual harbour; and it is known that Bishop Magnus, exactly in the spring of that year, was on a visitation in that part of his see, and it is to be presumed Columbus must have met and conversed with him. These are curious coincidences of small circumstances, which have their weight.—See *Captain Zahrtmann on the Voyage of Zeno*, and *F. Magnussen on the English Trade to Iceland*, 2nd vol. of *Nordisk Tidsskrift*, 1833.—L.

to a sea life,—it is not improbable that they should have undertaken a voyage of discovery to the west and south, and have renewed it when they found a land which produced building timber and skins to repay them. It was certainly not seamanship that was wanting among them in those ages, but science only. The class of vessels in which they sailed made them in a great measure independent of the science of navigation; because their vessels were of an easy draught of water, and they had a command with their oars and their numerous crews over their vessels, which made a lee shore, or other unfavourable positions, of no such importance as to modern ships. In size, and as sea-boats, their vessels in general were probably equal or superior to those in which Columbus made his first voyage. One of Columbus's vessels is understood to have been only a half-decked craft. Sebastian Cabot, and some of the earliest explorers of Baffin's Bay, sailed in vessels under thirty tons. The *Anna Pink*, which accompanied Lord Anson half round the world, was a vessel of eighteen tons. In their shipping, seamanship, and habits of sea life and endurance, there was certainly nothing to make it, *a priori*, improbable that they should undertake a voyage of discovery to the south and west of Greenland. The details of adventures on such a voyage may not be correct, and yet the fact itself true. The following is an abridgment, as short as possible, of the details, and the conclusions drawn from them as to the localities in America which they visited. The

eight chapters themselves are annexed to Olaf Trygvesson's Saga.

Eirik Red, in spring, 986, emigrated from Iceland to Greenland with Heriulf Bardson. He fixed his abode at Brattahlid, in Eiriksfiord; and Heriulf at Heriulfsnes. Biarne, the son of the latter, was absent in Norway at the time, and finding on his return that his father was gone, resolved to follow him, and put to sea. As winter was approaching, they had bad weather, northerly winds and fogs, and did not know where they were. When it cleared up they saw a land without mountains, but with many small hills, and covered with wood. This not answering the description of Greenland, they turned about and left it on the larboard hand; and sailing two days they came to another land, flat, and covered with wood. Then they stood out to sea with a south-west wind, and saw a third land, high, and the mountains covered with glaciers; and coasting along it they saw it was an island. Biarne did not land, but stood out to sea with the same south-west wind, and sailing with fresh gales reached, in four days more, Heriulfsnes in Greenland, his father's abode.

Some years after this, supposed to be about 994, Biarne was in Norway on a visit to Earl Eirik, and was much blamed, when he told of his discovery, for not having examined the countries more accurately. Leif, a son of Eirik Red, bought his ship, when Biarne returned to Greenland, and with a crew of thirty-five men set out, about the year 1000, to look for these lands. He came first to the land which



Biarne had seen last, landed, found no grass, but vast icy mountains in the interior, and between them and the shore a plain of flat slaty stones (hella), and called the country Helluland. They put to sea, and came to another country, which was level, covered with woods, with many cliffs of white sand, and a low coast, and called the country Markland (outfield or woodland). They again stood out to sea with a north-east wind, and after two days' sailing made land, and came to an island eastward of the mainland, and entered into a channel between the island and a point projecting north-east from the mainland. They sailed eastward, saw much ground laid dry at ebb tide, and at last went on shore at a place where a river which came from a lake fell into the sea. They brought their vessel through the river into the lake, and anchored. Here they put up some log huts; but, after resolving to winter there, they constructed larger booths or houses. After lodging themselves, Leif divided his people into two companies, to be employed by turns in exploring the country and working about the houses. One of the exploring party, a German by birth, called Tyrker, was one day missing. They went out to look for him, and soon met him, talking German, rolling his eyes, and beside himself. He at last told them in Norse, as they did not understand German, that he had been up the country, and had discovered vines and grapes; adding, "that he should know what vines and grapes were, as he was born in a country in which they were in plenty." They now occupied

themselves in hewing timber for loading the vessel, and collecting grapes with which they filled the ship's boat. Leif called the country Vinland. They sailed in spring, and returned to Greenland.

Leif's brother, Thorvald, set out, in the year 1002, to Vinland in Leif's vessel, and came to his booths or houses, and wintered there. In spring Thorvald sent a party in the boat to explore the coast to the south. They found the country beautiful, well wooded, with but little space between the woods and the sea, and long stretches of white sand, and also many islands and shoals; and on one island found a corn barn, but no other traces of people. They returned in autumn to Leif's booths. Next summer Thorvald sailed with the large vessel, first eastward, then northward, past a headland opposite to another headland, and forming a bay. They called the first headland Kialarnes (Keel Ness). They then sailed into the nearest fiord, to a headland covered with wood. Thorvald went on shore, and was so pleased that he said "he should like to stay there." On going on board they observed three hillocks on the sandy shore. They went up to them, and found they were three canoes, with three Skrælings under each. They killed eight of them, and one made his escape in his canoe. A great number afterwards came in skin-canoes and attacked them. They were repulsed; but Thorvald was wounded by an arrow and died, and according to his directions was buried at the promontory where he had expressed his wish to stay, or take up his abode, with a cross at the head and

one at the foot of his grave ; and the place was called Crossness. His companions returned to Leif's booths, wintered there, and in spring sailed to Greenland.

Thorstein, Eirik's third son, set out in the same ship, with his wife Gudrid, and a crew of twenty-five men, to bring home his brother's body ; but after driving about all summer they returned, without making the land, to Lysefiord in Greenland, where Thorstein died, and his wife Gudrid returned to Eiriksfjord.

Next summer, viz., 1006, two ships from Iceland came to Greenland. One was commanded by Thorfin, called Karlsefne (of manly endowment) ; the other by Biarne Grimolfson. A third ship was commanded by Thorvard. Thorfin Karlsefne had married in the course of the winter Gudrid, the widow of Thorvald, and by her advice resolved on going to Vinland in spring. Thorvard had married Freydis, a natural daughter of Eirik ; and the three ships set out with 160 men, and all kinds of live stock, to establish a colony in Vinland. They sailed first to the Vestribygd (within Davis's Straits), and to Biarney (Disco Isle). From thence they sailed in a southerly direction to Helluland, where they found many foxes. From thence, sailing two days to the south, they came to Markland, a wooded country stocked with animals. Then they sailed south-west for a long time, having the land to starboard, until they came to Kialarnes, where there were great deserts, and long beaches and sands. When they had passed these, the land was indented with inlets. They

had two Scots with them, Hake and Hekia, whom Leif had formerly received from King Olaf Trygvesson, and who were very swift of foot. They were put on shore to explore the country to the south-west, and in three days they returned with some grapes, and some ears of wheat, which grew wild in that country. They continued their course until they came to a fiord which penetrated far into the land. Off the mouth of it was an island with strong currents round it, and also up in the fiord. They found vast numbers of eider ducks on the island, so that they could scarcely walk without treading on their eggs. They called the island Straumey (Stream Isle), and the fiord Straumfiord. A party of eight men, commanded by Thorhal, left them here, and went north to seek for Vinland. Thorfin Karlsefne proceeded with Snorre, Biarne, and the rest, in all 151 men, southwards. Those who went northwards passed Kialarnes; but were driven by westerly gales off the land, and to the coast of Ireland, where, it was afterwards reported they were made slaves. Thorfin Karlsefne and his men arrived at the place where a river issuing from a lake falls into the sea. Opposite to the mouth of the river were large islands. They steered into the lake, and called the place Hop (the Hope). On the low grounds they found fields of wheat growing wild, and on the rising grounds vines. One morning a number of skin-canoes came to them. The people were sallow-coloured, ill-looking, with ugly heads of hair, large eyes, and broad cheeks; and after looking at the strangers they retired round

the cape to the south-west. Thorfin Karlsefne put up dwelling-houses a little above the bay, and they wintered there : no snow fell, and their cattle lived in the open field. On the shortest day the sun was above the horizon in the watch before and after mid-day watch. A number of canoes came again from the south-west, holding up a white shield as a signal of peace, and bartered gray furs for bits of cloth, and for milk soup. The bull belonging to the party happened to bellow, and the Skrælings were terrified, and fled in their canoes. Gudrid, Thorfin Karlsefne's wife, lay in here of a son, who was called Snorre. In the beginning of the following winter, the Skrælings attacked them. They were defeated by the courage of Gudrid (who appears to have been far advanced in pregnancy at the time of this attack); but lost a man, and were so dispirited by the prospect of constant hostilities with the natives, that they resolved to return. They sailed east, and came to Straumfiord. Thorfin Karlsefne then took one of the ships to look for Thorhal, while the rest remained behind. They proceeded northwards round Kialarnes and afterwards to the north-west, the land being to larboard of them, and covered with thick forests. They considered the hills they saw at Hope, and these, as one continuous range. They spent the third winter at Straumfiord. Thorfin Karlsefne's son was now three years old. When they sailed from Vinland they had southerly winds, and came to Markland, where they met five Skrælings, and took two boys whom they taught Norse, and who told

them their people had no houses, but lived in holes and caves: that they had kings; one called Aval-damon, and the other Valdidida. Biarne Grimolfson was driven into the Irish Ocean, and came into waters so infested with worms that their ship was in a sinking state. Some of the crew were saved in the boat, which had been smeared over with seal-oil, which is a preventive against worms in wood. Thorfin Karlsefne continued his voyage to Greenland, and arrived at Eiriksfiord.

During the same summer, 1011, a ship from Norway came to Greenland. The vessel belonged to two brothers, Helge and Finboge, who wintered in Greenland. Freydis (the natural daughter of Eirik Red, who had married Thorvard) proposed to them to join in an expedition to Vinland, each party to have thirty men, and to divide the gain equally. They agreed, and set out, and reached Leif's booths, where they spent the winter; but Freydis, who had taken five men more with her than the agreement allowed, quarrelled with the brothers, and murdered them and the whole of their people, and returned in spring (1013) to Greenland.

Thorfin Karlsefne went to Norway with his Vinland cargo next summer, and it was considered very valuable. He sold even a piece of wood used for a door-bar, or a broomstick, to a Bremen merchant for half a mark of gold; for it was of mosur-wood\* of Vinland. He returned, and purchased land in Iceland; and many people of distinction are descended

\* Supposed to have been bird's-eye maple. Early Engl. *moser*.

from him and his son Snorre, who was born in Vinland. After his death his widow, Gudrid, went to Rome, and on her return lived in religious seclusion in Iceland.

The above is an abridgment of the eight chapters on which the whole accounts of Vinland rest, and which are given at length in the Appendix; and so much fanciful speculation has been reared upon this foundation, that it deserves examination. The main facts—the discovery of various lands to the south and west of Greenland, the repeated voyages to them, and the reasonable motives of such voyages—bear all the internal evidences of simple truth. We may generally believe in the truth of the accounts of men's actions, when we see reasonable and sufficient motives for them so to act. Iceland, although it had wood in those days, and has some still, produced only a scrubby small brushwood of birch or hazel, not fit for ship-building, nor for the large halls which it was the fashion of the age for great people to have for entertaining and lodging their followers in; and the state of society made it necessary for safety to keep large bodies of retainers always at hand, and about them. It is told as a remarkable thing in the *Landnama Book*, or *History of the Original Settlers in Iceland* (page 29), that Avang found such large wood where he settled, that he built a long-ship; and in the *Kristni Saga* it is mentioned that Hialte Skeggjeson built a ship at home, so large that he sailed in it to Norway. In general, however, they had to buy their sea-going vessels in Norway. The

drift-wood found about the shores of Iceland in great abundance to a late period, and perhaps even now, would be too much shaken and worm-eaten to be fit for ship-building, even if it were of a sufficient size. To go in quest of the wooded countries to the south-west, from whence drift-wood came to their shores, was a reasonable, intelligible motive for making a voyage in search of the lands from whence it came, and where this valuable material could be got for nothing. So far we see reasonable motives followed by reasonable and perfectly credible acts and results. In the account, however, of the details upon which so much has been built up by modern antiquaries, we find no such consistency, credibility, or internal evidence of truthfulness. Leif and his successors, Thorfin Karlsefne and others, arrive in Vinland in spring—say in May, June, or July. In what climate, or part of the world, are grapes to be found in those months? They can hardly tread on Straum Island—settled by our modern antiquaries to be Egg Island, at the mouth of Plymouth Sound in Massachusetts—for the eggs of eider ducks. It was consequently early in spring, before birds were hatched, and before grapes have the shape of fruit in any climate, that they found ripe grapes and ears of wheat! Do vines, or wheat, or corn of any kind, grow spontaneously in those countries? This is a question by no means satisfactorily ascertained. Tyrker the German, who knew so well grapes and vines, “because he was born in a country in which these are not scarce,” comes back to his party after a short absence, roll-



ing his eyes, making faces, talking German, and half drunk. All the grapes in Germany, and Vinland to boot, would not make a man drunk, without their juice undergoing the vinous fermentation. This is clearly the fiction of some saga-maker, who knew no more of wine than that it was the juice of the grape; and all the geographical speculations upon the sites and localities of the Vinland of the Northmen, built upon the natural products of the land, fall to the ground. The eider duck, on our side of the world, is very rarely seen in lower latitudes than 60°. It may be different on the American coast; but the Skrælings, the sallow-complexioned people with skin-canoes with whom they bartered cloth and milk for sable and squirrel or grey skins, are, together with their articles of traffic, of northern origin. The red race of Indians could never have been called Skrælings, and described as such,—viz., with broad cheeks, and sallow complexions,—by Northmen who knew the Skrælings, or Esquimaux race, in Greenland. But we are told the Esquimaux race extended once much farther south, beyond Newfoundland and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and as far south as we please to have them. It is as easy to tell us that once the juice of the grape would intoxicate without the vinous fermentation,—that wheat would grow without being sown,—and that a barn, or more properly a kiln-barn, might be found in a land without dwelling-houses. All the geographical knowledge that can be drawn from the accounts of the natural products of Vinland in these eight chapters, points

clearly to the Labrador coast, or Newfoundland, or some places north of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The terror of the Skrælings at the bellowing of Thorfin Karlsefne's bull points rather to an island people, as the natives of Prince Edward's Island, or of Newfoundland; for a continental people in that part of America could not be strangers to the much more formidable bison, or musk ox, or buffalo. The piece of mosur-wood from Vinland, which Thorfin Karlsefne sold to a Bremen merchant for half a mark of gold, must have derived its value either from its intrinsic worth or beauty as wood or dye-wood, or as a stick coming from a distant unknown land. In the latter case the kind or quality of the wood, and whether it grew south or north, were circumstances of no consequence to the buyer: it was a curiosity from an unknown land. In the former case, Thorfin Karlsefne must be supposed to have gone to Honduras to cut his broomstick. The maple, or whatever wood for furniture grows more to the north in America, is not more beautiful than birch wood or other European wood. If it had been logwood, fustic, mahogany, that was meant by mosur-wood, it would be a proof that the saga-writer was drawing upon his own imagination in the details of his account of Thorfin Karlsefne; for vines and wheat growing spontaneously, mahogany trees or dye-woods, and Esquimaux in skin-canoes trading with sable skins and grey skins, and furs described to be white or all grey,—“grávara ok safali ok alskonar skinnavara,” and “algra skinn”—never met in one locality: for the

former are products of a very southern latitude, and the people and animals described belong to a northern climate. The account of the time from land to land in the voyages of Biarne, Leif, or Thorfin Karlsefne, leads to no satisfactory result as to the land they came to; because we neither know their rate of sailing in a day, nor whether by a day's sailing they meant sailing day and night, or that they took down and stowed their great square-sail at night, and lay-to with a little try-sail aft till daylight, as similarly rigged vessels on the fishing banks do at the present day. The lying-to all night, as they were in an unknown sea, was the better seamanship, and we may suppose it was their way of sailing. In their ordinary voyages they appear always to have put up their tent-cloths at night, brought their vessel to the land or to an anchor, and to have gone to rest, leaving only a watch on deck. It is usually mentioned in the saga when they sail night and day, as a special circumstance. It does not appear probable they would run with all sail in the night through an unknown sea; and if they took down sail at night, and lay-to in the Gulf stream, all conjecture founded on a number of days' sailing from Helluland to Markland, or from Markland to Vinland is quite arbitrary, and without guide. The description of the land is equally unsatisfactory as a means of discovering the localities in Vinland they visited, without more precise data. A country of stony soil, with little vegetation among the slaty fragments that cover it, applies to all the country from

Hudson's Bay to Newfoundland; and Helluland, so called from this circumstance, is a name that would suit any part of Labrador as well as Newfoundland. Markland, so called because low or level, and covered with thick forests, as a description may be applied to any part of America as well as to Nova Scotia. An island with a sound between it and the main, or a low shore with remarkably white sand cliffs and shallow water, a fiord or inlet of the sea, a river running out of a lake, a bay between two headlands, one of them of a conspicuous figure, are good landmarks for identifying a country of which the position is known, but are good for nothing as data for fixing that position itself; because these are features common to all sea-coasts, and, on a small or great scale, to be found within every hundred miles of a run along the sea-board of a country. It is evident from the personal adventures ascribed by the saga-maker to the personages, that the details are imaginary, and only the general outline true. The revival of Thorstein Eirikson's body, and its prophesying what was to befall Gudrid in her lifetime, are within the ordinary belief of those times, and therefore do not lessen the confidence in other circumstances related; nor the appearance to her alone of another Gudrid who spoke Norse to her in Vinland, and whom nobody else saw. But the adventures of Freydis, her murder of the two brothers, thirty men, and the women, is an improbable, not to say an impossible circumstance; as her thirty-five men had no motive for such a butchery of their comrades, in

a country in which they needed all their strength for their safety, and for the objects of their voyage. All the details seem merely the filling up of imagination, to make a story of a main fact, the discovery of Vinland by certain personages, whose names, and the fact of their discovering unknown lands southwest of Greenland, are alone to be depended upon.

But two facts are stated by our modern antiquaries, which are held to be quite conclusive as to the locality in America discovered by the Icelanders. One is, that in the details of Leif's voyage and residence in Vinland, it is stated that on the shortest day the sun was above the horizon from half-past seven o'clock in the morning to half-past four o'clock in the afternoon, or nine hours, which gives the latitude of the place  $41^{\circ} 24' 10''$ , and which brings it to between Seaconnet Point in  $41^{\circ} 26'$ , and Judith Point in  $41^{\circ} 23'$ , and which two points form the entrance into Mount Hope Bay; which corresponds, even to the name Hop or Hope, with the description of a river, now called the Taunton, running from a lake into the sea, and with all the other landmarks or accounts of the appearance of the coast given in the saga. The other fact, not less striking, is, that in this very neighbourhood,—viz., at Assonet Point, on the shore of the river Taunton, in latitude  $41^{\circ} 44'$ , near the town of Berkley in the district of Massachusetts,—a stone covered with Runic inscriptions is still to be seen, and is known by the name of the Dighton Writing (written) Rock, and was an object of curiosity to the early English settlers as far back as 1680. These two

happy coincidences are so happy—so like finding a box, and 800 years afterwards finding the key that of all the keys in the world can alone open it—that people almost doubt, at the first hearing of it, whether the news be not too good to be true. The first question that arises to the doubting reader is, how, in Leif Eirikson's time,—that is, about the year 1000, when Christianity was scarcely introduced, and Church festivals, Church time, and the knowledge and prayers of churchmen unknown,—did the Icelanders divide time? The whole circle of the horizon appears to have been divided by them into four quarters, each subdivided into two, making eight divisions, or *áttir* (from which our old word airths applied to the winds, seems derived); and these eight watches, each of three of our hours, made up the day, which we divide into 24 parts. It was not until 120 years after Leif's voyage, viz., in 1123, that Bishop Thorlak established in Iceland a code of Church regulations or laws, by which time was more minutely ascertained for Church prayers and observances. For all secular business, among a seafaring and labouring population, the division of time into eight watches was sufficiently minute for all their practical purposes. Now the saga says, "*Sol hafði thar Eyktarstad ok Dagmalastad um skammdegi*;" which clearly means that, on the shortest day, they had the sun in the watches called the Dagmalastad and the Eyktarstad; that the sun rose in the former, and set in the latter, and not as in Iceland, where the rising and setting were, on the shortest day, included in one watch.

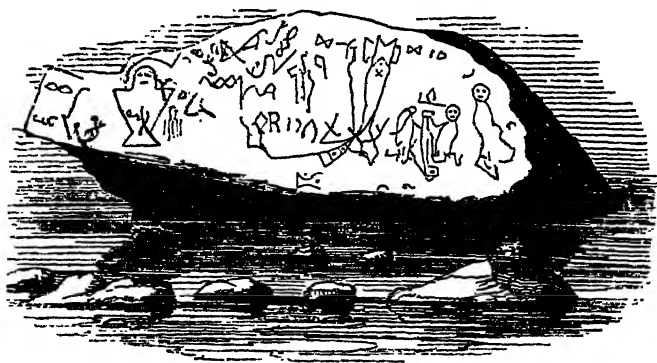
The Dagmalastad was the watch immediately before the mid-day watch (Middegi), and the Eyktarstad that immediately after. Now if we reckon from noon, the middle of the mid-day watch, it would begin at half-past ten o'clock of our time, and end at half-past one o'clock; Dagmalastad would begin at half-past seven, and end at half-past ten; and Eyktarstad begin at half-past one, and end at half-past four in the afternoon. Now if the sun rose any time within the Dagmalastad, and set any time within the Eyktarstad watch,—that is to say, any time between half-past seven and half-past ten for its rising, and any time between half-past one and half-past four of our time for its setting, —it would answer all the conditions of the text of the saga, which merely says they had the sun in these watches, not during the whole of these watches; and the precision of ideas and expression which characterises the Icelanders would undoubtedly have expressed, if that had been the meaning, that the sun rose at the beginning of Dagmalastad, and set at the end of Eyktarstad. Torfæus, certainly not inferior in judgment and knowledge to any antiquary of our times, and who, as a contemporary and friend, had on every doubtful point the opinion of Arne Magnæus, the first Icelandic antiquary who has ever appeared, makes out, from the same text, that the sun may be considered to have been above the horizon from the middle of Dagmalastad to the middle of Eyktarstad,—that is, for about six hours,—which would correspond to a latitude of  $49^{\circ}$  instead of  $41^{\circ}$ ; and he, and Arne Magnæus we may presume

with him, bring Vinland to some place in Newfoundland, or in the St. Lawrence, which certainly would agree better with the description of the people and products, excepting the ready-made wine, the spontaneous wheat, and the fine wood, than Taunton river in Massachusetts. With regard to the Dighton Writing Rock, upon which so much has been built in vast and expensive publications, such as the "*Antiquitates Americanæ*" (Hafniæ, 1837), and other works, the following observations may lead to a true estimate of its historical value. The rock or stone is a boulder or transported mass, not a stone belonging to the ground-rock of the country. It is about  $11\frac{1}{2}$  feet long by  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet high, running up to an edge, and the surface, or side on which the Runic inscription is found, sloping at an angle of  $60^{\circ}$  from its base. It is one of that class of detached masses of primary rock scattered over the whole northern hemisphere of our globe—the evidences of some vast convulsion beyond human knowledge or conjecture. Whoever has examined this class of stones must have observed that it is almost a characteristic, distinguishing them from fixed ground rock of similar formation, that they are more interspersed with black or greenish veins or marks of a different substance from the component parts of the rock, and in short, with lines which often assume the appearance of sea-weed or other fossil plant, enclosed in the crystallised matrix of the stone, but which are in reality small veins, or rather lines of chlorite. The Runic inscription at Runamo, in Bleking in Sweden, which from the days



of Saxo Grammaticus to the present times, was considered to be an inscription of real but unintelligible letters on the ground-rock, and which antiquaries but a few years ago supposed they had deciphered, and actually published their explanation of it, is now discovered, and admitted to be nothing but veins of one substance interspersed in another. Chemistry settled the historical value of this Runic inscription. The Dighton Writing Rock would perhaps be the better of a certificate from the mineralogist, as well as the antiquary. Supposing it beyond all doubt a stone with artificial characters, letters or

No. 1.



figures inscribed upon it, the first question that occurs to every inquirer must be, what is there to prove that these marks are the work of the Northmen, and not of the natives, or of the first European settlers about the year 1620? The stone, of which No. 1 is a delineation (No. 2 is a copy of the marks or inscription in 1790, and No. 3 in 1830), bears nothing to show by

No. 2.



No. 3.



No. 2.—A copy of the inscription on the Dighton Stone, as given by Haylio and Goodwin in 1799.  
 No. 3.—A copy of the same, as given by the American antiquaries in 1830.

whom, or when, the marks in question were scratched upon it. The native tribes of America, the Hottentots, even the natives of Australia according to Captain Gray's narrative of his travels, have a propensity to delineate rude figures and marks upon the sides of caves and remarkable rocks, to indicate that they have been there, and even to show their tribe, numbers, and the direction they have taken. This stone is, by the description, quite tempting to indulge the propensity common to all men, savage or civilised, to leave some mark after them of their having existed; for it is said to be conspicuous from its position, flat surface, and different texture from the common rock of the country around.\* It is evident, on referring to No. 2 and No. 3, that there is no sequence of letters, either Runic or Roman, upon the Dighton Writing Rock, but only detached unconnected marks, belong-

\* "The Dighton stone is a fine-grained greywacke, and the rock of the neighbourhood a large conglomerate. It is situated  $6\frac{1}{2}$  miles south of Taunton, on the Taunton river, a few feet from the shore, and is covered with water at flood tide, on the west side of Assonet Point, in the town of Berkley, county of Bristol, and state of Massachusetts, and in a parish or district called Dighton. The marks are described as 'showing no method in the arrangement of them.' The lines are from half an inch to an inch in width, and in depth sometimes one-third of an inch, though in general very superficial. They were, inferring from the rounded elevations and intervening depressions, pecked in upon the rock and not chiselled or smoothly cut out."—(*Communication of the Rhode Island Historical Society to the Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen, 1830.*) Other rocks, similarly marked with rude hieroglyphics, or figures of animals, are found in various parts of the interior of America, far from the coast,—as on the Alleghany river, the Connecticut river, about Lake Erie, on Cumberland river, about Rockcastle Creek,—and similar, as sculptured work, to the Dighton stone. Are these too memorials of Thorfin Karlsefne, left in Vinland by his party of woodcutters? or are they the rude memorials of the wandering Indians, left, if they have a meaning, to show those of their own tribe who may follow that they have been on the spot some time before?—L.

ing to any people or period one may please to fancy. What is there to prove that these are not the scratches of some idle sailor boy, or of some master Dighton of the first settlers in 1620? Every Runic inscription given by Olaus Wormius, in his "*Literatura Runica*," is in regular columns of letters from right to left, or from top to bottom, or going round the stone; but still in regular rows, letter after letter. Here all the scratches are detached marks, such as a child would make on the smooth side of a stone, without meaning. The only semblance to letters is in the middle of the stone, in which antiquaries discover the name of Thorfin,—viz., Thorfin Karlsefne, the leader of the expedition. In the older copy (No. 2 of the inscription) we see a lozenge-shaped mark, a Roman letter R, a stroke, and a triangular mark. In the later copy of 1830 (No. 3), the lozenge has got a tail to it, and the Roman letters RFIN are distinct. The first copy was taken in 1790, by Dr. Baylie and Mr. Goodwin; the latter in 1830, by the Rhode Island Historical Society. Both copies coincide; except that the figure of a cock, and of some animal apparently, and some unintelligible marks delineated in the older, have in the course of forty years become obliterated, and are not given in the later copy. But by some strange process, although it is one not at all uncommon in stones that have attracted the antiquary's notice, the thing sought for—the letters of the word Thorfin—has in the course of the forty years gained wonderfully in distinctness, instead of becoming obliterated or less legible. Let

any one look at the upper copy (No. 2), and make out, if he can, any thing approaching to the word Thorfin, except a lozenge and R, such as one may see on a box or package in a ship's cargo ; but let him look at No. 3—the copy taken since the Icelandic origin of the inscription was broached,—and there to be sure he will see without spectacles a lozenge with a tail, and the Roman letters F I N Z, making Thorfinz. In the tables of the various forms of Runic letters given by Wormius, in his “*Literatura Runica*,” there is no such lozenge-shaped letter to express Th or Tho ; but as in many districts Runic letters appear to have had different shapes from those used in other parts, this circumstance is of little importance. The letter R may have been common to both alphabets, the Roman and Runic : the letters F I N are decidedly Roman ; so that in this Runic inscription there is but one letter that may possibly be Runic, if it be a letter at all, and the rest are all Roman characters. In both copies, just over the lozenge letter, is a mark, also in Roman characters, which may be N A, or M A ; the letter A being formed by the last branch of the M. Either will do ; because, if it be N A, it may be part of the word Landnam ; and if it be M A, it will surely be part of the word Madr : and Landnammadr signifies the first settler of a country,—the *origines gentis*,—and is so used to denote the original settlers in Iceland, of whom the Landnama Saga treats. Close to this N A, in both copies, are marks of three tens and a one, in Roman numerals, viz., XXXI. ; and before

the first is something like a Greek gamm. but which may possibly be intended for a Roman C. Now if this Roman C be intended for a hundred, it would not be for a Roman hundred or centum of five score, but a long hundred of six score, by which the Icelanders always counted; and ~~CXXXI~~. would in reality mean 151, not 131. Now, Thorfin Karlsefne had lost nine of his original party, who had gone northwards under Thorhal; and this number 9 added to the 151 so clearly and satisfactorily made out on the stone, just makes up the 160 men, the original number of Landnammen of Vinland who embarked with Thorfin Karlsefne. It would be puerile to dwell on such puerilities. To believe that Thorfin Karlsefne, or any of his party, was acquainted not only with the Runic and Roman letters, but with the Roman numerals, yet without knowing the use of those numerals, and the number of units they express; and should leave a Runic inscription, as it is called, without a Runic letter in it, and so rude as to show—if the marks are letters at all, and not merely scratches, marks, or initials, made at various times by various hands—a complete ignorance of the collocation of letters in a row so as to form words, and a complete ignorance of the value of the Roman numerals he was using,—would require the antiquarian credulity of a Jonathan Oldbuck.

The northern antiquaries are misled in their speculations about Vinland by the singular case of the ancient Greenland colony. By the rarest coincidences of new and old colonisation, a kind of

double evidence has come out to prove the veracity of the saga accounts of that old Icelandic colony. First is the documentary evidence of the saga, bearing no inconsistency or internal evidence of deviation from truth, and supported by collateral documentary evidence, from Adam of Bremen and other writers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries incidentally mentioning Greenland and its bishops, and which is evidence precisely similar in kind to the documentary evidence relative to Vinland. But a second mass and kind of evidence substantiating the first has come out in our times, by the discovery in Greenland of remains of buildings, churches, and of inscriptions and other material proofs, corroborating the documentary proofs of the existence and state of this ancient colony in Greenland given in the sagas. Our modern antiquaries want to substantiate the documentary evidence of the saga relative to Vinland by a similar kind of material evidence to be discovered in America, without considering that the cases are totally distinct and different. Greenland was a colony with communications, trade, civil and ecclesiastical establishments, and a considerable population, for 300 years at least before it was lost sight of. Vinland was only visited by flying parties of wood-cutters, remaining at the utmost two or three winters, but never settling there permanently as colonists, nor as far as can be seen from the sagas, with any intention of settling. No division and occupation of the land, no agricultural preparations are mentioned.

Cattle they would have taken for milk, or food probably, at any rate, as salt to preserve meat must have been scarce in Greenland, where it could only be obtained by evaporating sea-water. Cattle taken with them, if the circumstance be true, are the only indication of any intention to settle; and a settlement or colony was not established. Three winters are the longest period any of these wood-cutting parties stayed in Vinland. To expect here, as in Greenland, material proofs to corroborate the documentary proofs, is weakening the latter by linking them to a sort of evidence which, from the very nature of the case,—the temporary visits of a ship's crew,—cannot exist in Vinland, and, as in the case of Greenland, come in to support them. It would be quite as judicious and consistent with sound principle of investigation to go to New Zealand, or the Sandwich Isles, to search for material proofs (old shoes, cocked hats, or pen-knives) of Captain Cook's having visited those places, and to link the documentary proofs of his discoveries to the authenticity of the material proofs—of the old shoes, cocked hats, and pen-knives—left by him on those shores. This is precisely the kind of investigation and reasoning, with regard to the discovery of Vinland by the Northmen, which antiquaries are pursuing; and to be sure it does lead them into laughable discoveries—quite as ridiculous as that of the Runic inscription on the Dighton Writing Stone, or as Oldbuck's Roman Prætorium on the Kaim of Kinprunes. Here is another specimen of



the development of the imaginative faculty among antiquaries.

In the town of Newport, near to the south end of Rhode Island, stands the circular stone-work of an old windmill, of about 18 feet in diameter within walls, and raised upon eight pillars of about 7 feet high and 5 to 6 feet apart, arched over so as to admit carts to come under the floor of the mill, and the corn-sacks to be hoisted up or lowered down through a hatch in the wooden floor above. This is the ordinary plan in large well-arranged windmills, as it takes the horses and carts out of the way of the wings of the mill, and of the lever on the ground by which the moveable wooden superstructure or head of the mill was formerly turned to the wind. The pillars supported the beams of the floor; and windows and a fireplace, corresponding to the floor or platform of the mill, are in the wall, which is about 24 feet high, built of rough stone very substantially, and with lime-mortar, and has been harled or roughcast with lime. The situation is at the summit, or nearly so, of the principal eminence in the neighbourhood, open to the sea breezes, and with no out-walls or anything near it to intercept the wind. It is universally called by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood "the old stone mill." These are pretty good proofs that the building has been a mill; but there is also documentary proof of it. Rhode Island was first settled by the English in 1636, and two years afterwards (1638) Newport and the south end were

occupied. In 1678, that is forty years afterwards, Benedict Arnold, who appears to have been governor of the settlement at one time, in his last will and testament calls this very building his stone mill. This is not all. One of the first settlers, a Mr. Peter Easton, had the laudable custom of marking in his pocket-book whatever notable event occurred in his township; and under the year 1663 he makes the memorandum, "This year we built the first windmill." Now we have here, first, the documentary evidence of Governor Arnold's will, calling it, in 1678, his stone mill, and bequeathing it as such; and of Mr. Peter Easton's pocket-book, giving posterity the information that "the first windmill in the township was built in 1663;" and as they could scarcely have required two mills at once if they had none before, we may fairly presume that the mill built in 1663 was that bequeathed in 1678. And, secondly, we have the material proof of the building, with its modern walls, built with mortar of lime and sand, and harled, and with a chimney-place, windows, and beam supports for a mill platform or floor, being altogether fit for and on the plan of a mill, and of nothing else, and its situation also being adapted for that purpose; and the only name given to it by the neighbouring inhabitants being "the old stone mill." Don Quixote himself could not have resisted such evidence of this having been a windmill. But those sly rogues of Americans dearly love a quiet hoax. With all gravity they address a solemn communication to the

Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen, respecting those interesting remains of "a structure bearing an antique appearance"—"a building possibly of the ante-Columbian times"—"a relic, it may be, of the Northmen, the first discoverers of Vinland!" After describing the situation of the mill, they go on to say that this "dilapidated structure" has long attracted the attention of the numerous strangers who come in the fine season, from all parts of the Union, to enjoy the sea-bathing and pure air of Newport, and they often question the inhabitants concerning its origin; but the only answer they receive is, that it has always been known by the name of "the old stone mill." It has excited the most lively interest among the learned in those parts, and many conjectures have been hazarded about its origin and object; but these, say the wags, with great solemnity of phrase, "are shrouded with mystery;" and all that can be learned from the inhabitants is, that as long as people can remember it has been called "the old stone mill." But whether this structure could have been built for a mill, although no doubt it is so well adapted for a mill that it may have been used for such purpose at some period, is matter of grave doubt to many; because no similar building, of old or new date, for any purpose, exists in the neighbourhood, or in all the country. They send, along with their communication concerning this interesting structure of the original Scandinavian discoverers of Vinland in the eleventh century, drawings of the exterior and

interior, a ground plan and an elevation of the old stone mill; all which they submit to the consideration of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries at Copenhagen. It must be allowed that these Rhode Island wags have played off their joke with admirable dexterity. They conceal nothing that fixes the building to have been beyond all doubt a mill; neither the name it has always gone by,—nor its windmill plan and site,—nor its modern walls built with lime and sand, and roughcast,—nor General Arnold's will calling it his stone mill,—nor Mr. Peter Easton's memorandum of the year in which it was built; but they cunningly keep all these circumstances in the background, and bring to the front “the dilapidated structure,” — “the wonder of strangers from all parts of the United States,” — “the structure bearing an antique appearance,” — its origin and use “shrouded with mystery,” — “but possibly ante-Columbian,” — “a remain, possibly, of the Scandinavian discoverers of Vinland in the eleventh century.” The bait took; and no doubt these comical fellows at Newport are chuckling in their club-room at seeing their “old stone mill” figuring in the Annals of the Northern Antiquarian Society, with arches and pillars like a Grecian temple. It is only when one comes, compass in hand, to a scale of feet and inches, that one finds this magnificent structure, with pillars and arches, and of which an exterior and interior view is given in the Annals of the Antiquarian Society of Copenhagen, is in reality the bottom of a mill of the very

ordinary size of eighteen feet within walls, standing on pillars six or seven feet high and five or six feet apart, and arched over,—like to and on the scale of the pillars and arches of a cart-shed, or a horse-course of a thrashing-mill, instead of a structure, as the plates, of which no less than three are given, would lead you to believe, on the plan of the Coliseum, and of the size of the Temple of Vesta. This is very amusing; but it is not quite so amusing to have to pay heavy prices for magnificent books, got up in two or three languages, superb in size, paper, and type, decorated with fac-simile specimens of the writing of illuminated beautifully executed saga manuscripts, illustrated with splendid copper-plates, and published in the name and under the auspices of a great and learned antiquarian society; and to find you have been paying gold for such old-wifery as this Dighton writing rock and Newport old stone mill. It would, in fact, be difficult to point out any fact or observation of value relative to the discovery of Vinland which has not been brought to light and weighed by Torfæus, in 1707, in his little tract on Vinland. Torfæus was an antiquary of great judgment. He came first into the field, and seized upon the only fact with respect to the discovery of Vinland that there was to seize upon—the documentary proof, from a manuscript of fixed date, of a discovery of Vinland, recorded in writing a hundred years before Columbus's first voyage; and that record known to Columbus, or Columbus in a situation to know of it, a few years

before he undertook that voyage. Torfæus left nothing behind to glean with respect to Vinland of any value in the question of the discovery of America by the Northmen.

The legend of Gudleif Gudlaugson, like this saga of Thorfin Karlsefne, gives a discovery not unlikely to have taken place, and much more to the south; but with adventures which border on the incredible. It is contained in the Eyrbyggja Saga. Towards the end of King Olaf the Saint's time, about 1030, Gudleif, on his voyage westward from Iceland to Ireland, was overtaken by a heavy storm from east and north-east, which drove him far out to sea to the south-west, so that none of them knew where they were. After driving about the greater part of the summer they came to land; but were seized by the natives, who came in crowds to the vessel, and spoke a language they did not understand, but it appeared to them like Irish. They observed that the natives were disputing whether to make slaves of them or put them to death. In the meantime an old grand-looking man, with white hair, came riding along, and all the natives received him with the greatest respect. He accosted the Icelanders in the Norse tongue, and asked them if Snorre the Gode (one of the most important personages in Iceland) was alive still, and his sister Thurid. He would not tell his name, and forbade his countrymen to come there again, as the people were fierce, and attacked strangers, and the country had no good harbours. He gave them a gold ring to deliver

to Thurid, whom, he said, he liked better than her brother Snorre, and a sword for Thurid's son. Gudleif brought these things home, and people concluded that the man must have been Biorn Breid-vikingakappe, a skald, who was much respected, and who had fallen in love with Thurid, on which account her husband and her brother had persecuted him, and he had left Iceland in a vessel about the year 998, and had never afterwards been heard of: "and this is the only truth known concerning Biorn." This saga is supposed to have been written or composed in the beginning of the thirteenth century; as it mentions one Gudny telling him, the saga-writer, of taking up and interring in a church the bones of some of Snorre the Gode's predecessors, and this Gudny is known to have died about 1220. The legend has a value independent of the truth or falsity of the details. These are at least improbable. The man could have no object in concealing his name, which the tokens he was sending to Iceland would at once reveal, and no intelligible motive for not returning with his countrymen. But it is valuable, because, whatever may be the truth of the filling up, or even of the main event of a vessel being driven to an unknown land, it shows an existing rumour or idea among seafaring men, long before Columbus's discoveries, that a north-east wind would bring a vessel sailing from Iceland to Ireland to a new land on the south-west, if she ran before it; and not into an uninhabitable region of fire, as the Romans

appear to have conceived of the world. Some obscure knowledge of a western land must have been circulating as a foundation for this legend. The White Man's Land, the Great Ireland, a country in the west peopled by Christians originally of Ireland, has the same kind of value of showing that men, either from the reason in the supposition, which is the most likely, or from some actual chance discovery, had come to the conclusion that there was land in the west opposite the shores of Europe; and it also has the same kind of worthlessness as the other two legends—that the details are evidently fictitious and improbable.\*

### MEMOIR OF SNORRE STURLASON.

SNORRE STURLASON was born in the year 1178, at Hvam, in the present bailiwick of Dale, in the western province of Iceland. His father, Sturla Thordson, was a man of consequence, descended from the royal stock of Odin to which the Northern kings, and all the great families among the Northmen, traced their lineage; and he held by hereditary right the dignity of a Gode, which in the times of the Odin worship was hereditary in certain families descended from the twelve Diar, Drottar, or Godar, who accompanied Odin from Asgard. The office of Gode appears to have combined the functions of priest and judge

\* A full account of the Norse voyages to Vinland, with a discussion of the relation of Columbus to them, will be found in my little work "America not discovered by Columbus," third edition, Chicago, 1883.



originally; and long after the sacerdotal function had ceased the judicial remained, and was exercised as an hereditary jurisdiction over the locality or godord, even long after the establishment of Christianity. Snorre was sent in his infancy to Jon Loptson, of Odde, to be fostered. It was the custom of the age for people of consequence to send their children to be fostered by others, sometimes of higher and sometimes of lower station; but always of a station, connection, or influence that would be of use afterwards to the foster-child. This fostering was not merely nursing the child until he was weaned, but implied bringing him up to the age of manhood; and the ties of foster-father, foster-son, and foster-brother, appear to have been as strong and influential as the natural ties of blood relationship. The custom has arisen in turbulent times, from the policy of not giving an opportunity to hereditary enemies to cut off an entire family at one swoop, leaving no heir and avenger, and of strengthening the family by collateral alliances through the new ties. We read of many instances of the kings sending their infants to influential bondes to be fostered; by which, no doubt, a great local interest and connection was secured to the foster-child. In the social state of those ages each family was a distinct dynasty, beholden for its security to its own strength in friends and followers, and its own power to avenge its wrongs, rather than to the guardianship and force of law. The system of fosterage was a consequence of this social state; and the custom lingered in

England for a long time in the form of sending children to be brought up as pages in the families of distinguished personages. Jon Loptson appears to have been a person of more distinction than Snorre's own father. His grandfather was Sæmund Frode, the contemporary of Are who first committed the historical sagas to writing; Jon Loptson's mother, Thora, was an illegitimate daughter of King Magnus Barefoot. In such a family, we may presume the literature of the country would be cultivated, and the sagas of the historical events in Norway, and of the transactions of her race of kings, would be studied with great interest.

One would like to know how people of distinction in that age lived and were lodged in Iceland? What kind of house and housekeeping the daughter of a king would have there? We have no positive data to judge from; but we may infer from various circumstances that this class would be at least as well off as in Norway; that comparatively the comforts, luxuries, and splendour of life in the poor countries, would not be so much inferior to those of the rich countries as in our own days. Sugar, coffee, tea, silks, cotton, and all foreign articles, were almost equally out of reach and enjoyment in all the countries of the North. From the natural products, or crops of the land, all that was enjoyed had to be obtained. Iceland enjoyed the advantage of more security of property and person; and the natural products of Iceland,—fish, oil, skins, butter, wool, and before the introduction of cotton as a clothing material, the

wadmal, or coarse woollen cloth manufactured in Iceland, in which rent and taxes were paid, and which circulated as money through all the North, and in which even other goods were valued as a medium of exchange,—would all be of much higher comparative value than in after ages, when commerce and manufactures gave people a greater supply of better and cheaper articles for the same uses. The market for wood of Norway being confined to such islands as produced none for building purposes, the houses would probably be much the same in size and conveniences as those common among all classes in Norway, and little more expensive. The trade of bartering their products for those of other countries would probably be much more extensive than now, because their kind of products were much more generally used in other countries. In Thronthjem, Bergen, and Tunsberg, several merchant vessels at the same time are often spoken of in the sagas; and Torfæus, in his “*Vinlandia*,” page 69, mentions a Hrafnus Limiricepeta, so called from his frequent voyages to Limeric in Ireland—a Limeric trader—who had related to Thorfin, Earl of Orkney, some accounts of a Great Ireland in the Western Ocean. In the Færeyinga Saga, we read of merchants frequenting the Farey Isles to purchase the products of the country, and of the people sending off cargoes of their wool to Norway. The commercial intercourse of those times has probably been greater than we suppose, although dealings were only in the rude products of one land bartered against those of

another. Matthew Paris tells us of his being at Bergen in the year 1248, and of there being more than 200 vessels in that port at the same time. The poorer lands and countries of Europe, and the employment of their inhabitants, have in fact undergone a great depreciation in value, and which is still going on, by the introduction and general diffusion of better articles for food, clothing, and enjoyment, from better climes, and by the diffusion of more refined tastes and habits than the products of their soil and industry can gratify. When wadmal, or coarse woollen cloth, was the ordinary wear; stock-fish, or salt fish, in great use even in royal households; fish oil the only means in the North for lighting rooms,—the poorest countries, such as Iceland, Greenland, or the north of Norway, which produced these, must have been much more on a par with better countries, such as Denmark or England, which did not produce them, and must have been comparatively much better to live in, and the inhabitants nearer to the general condition of the people of other countries, than they are now. The daughter of King Magnus Barefoot would probably be as well lodged, fed, clothed, and attended, as she would have been in Scotland in that age.

Jon Loptson died when Snorre was nineteen years of age. Snorre continued to live with his foster-brothers, his own father being dead, and his patrimony inconsiderable and much wasted by his mother. At twenty-one years of age he married Herdis, the daughter of a wealthy priest called Berse, who lived

at Berg, in the bailiwick of Myre, where he also took up his abode. He got a considerable fortune with his wife,\* by whom he had several children, but only two who grew up; a son called Jon Murt, and a daughter called Halbera. He had also several illegitimate children; a son called Urokia, and a daughter called Ingi-bjorg. After being twenty-five years married to Herdis, he married, some time about 1224, she being still alive, another wife, Halveig, a rich widow, with whom he got also a large fortune. He quarrelled with the children of his first wife about their fortunes to which they were entitled when he parted from their mother. He was in enmity also with the husbands of both his daughters, each of whom had been divorced, or had had two husbands; and these sons-in-law, and his own brother Sighvat, were the parties who finally murdered him in their family feud. What is known of Snorre Sturlason is derived from an account of the Sturla family, called the "Sturlunga Saga," composed evidently by one of the descendants of the kinsmen with whom he had been in enmity. His bad actions are probably exaggerated, and his good concealed. With every allowance, however, for the false colouring which hatred and envy may have given to the picture, Snorre appears from it to have been a man of violent disposition,—greedy, selfish, ambitious, and under no restraint of principle in gratifying his avarice and evil passions. He is accused of amassing great wealth by unjust litiga-

\* Four thousand dollars it is reckoned to have been by antiquaries—a large fortune before silver became plentiful by the discovery of America.—L.

tion with his nearest kindred, and by retaining unjustly the property which of right belonged to them on his parting with his first wife; and of appearing at the Things with an armed body of 600 or 800 men, and obtaining by force the legal decisions he desired. He is accused also of having, on his visits to Norway, betrayed the independence of his country, and contributed to reduce Iceland to the state of a province of Norway. It is probable that much of the vices of the age, and of the inevitable events in history prepared by causes of remote origin, is heaped up by the saga-writer on Snorre's head. He was clearly guilty of the two greatest charges which, in a poor country and ignorant age, can be brought against a man—he was comparatively rich and comparatively learned. Of his wealth we are told that he possessed six considerable farms, on which his stock of cattle was so great that in one year, in which fodder was scarce, he lost 120 head of oxen without being seriously affected by it in his circumstances. He employed much of his wealth in improving and fortifying his main residence at Reykholt, to which he had removed from Berg. At Reykholt, he constructed a bathing room of cut free-stone, into which the water from a warm spring in the neighbourhood was conducted by a covered drain or pipe. Stone buildings in the North being rare, this structure was considered magnificent, and is spoken of as a proof at once of Snorre's wealth and extravagance. In this age it will rather be considered a proof that Snorre was a man of habits far more

refined than those of the people around him ; that, trifling as the structure may have been, it shows a mind of great energy and activity to have executed it, and of some refinement and improved habits to have felt the want of accommodations for personal cleanliness in his house. Snorre's first journey to Norway appears to have been about the year 1221, when he was forty-three years of age, and was still married to his first wife Herdis. He appears to have come to Norway on a visit to Earl Hakon Galen, who was married to Lady Christina, the daughter of King Sigurd the Crusader. We are told in the Sturlunga Saga, that Snorre had composed a poem in honour of the earl, who in return had sent him a sword and a suit of armour. On his arrival he found that the earl was dead, and his widow was married again to Askel, the Lagman of Gautland. He remained the first winter at the court of King Hakon and Earl Skule, who then ruled over Norway, and proceeded in summer to visit Lady Christina, by whom he was well received ; and it may be supposed that on this journey he collected the information relative to former transactions in Sweden and Denmark, as well as in Norway, that he gives in his Chronicle. The Lady Christina was a daughter of King Sigurd the Crusader by Malmfrid, a daughter of King Harald of Novgorod, whose mother was Gyda, a daughter of the English King Harald, the son of Earl Godwin, who fell at the battle of Hastings. This Lady Christina appears to have been married first to Erling Skakke, by whom she

had a son who was King of Norway, Magnus Erlingson, in the middle of whose reign Snorre's Chronicle ends. She was then married to Earl Hakon Galen, after whom she married the Lagman Askel. On his return from this visit Snorre remained two years with Earl Skule in Norway. It is evident that, as a chronicler, Snorre Sturlason had thus enjoyed opportunities of collecting or correcting the accounts of transactions of former times, which few contemporary writers possessed. He was made a cup-bearer, or dish-bearer, equivalent to the modern dignity of chamberlain, by King Hakon ; and is accused by his enemies of having entered into a private agreement with the King and Earl Skule that he should use his influence to subvert the independence which Iceland had hitherto enjoyed, and to persuade the Thing to submit to the Government of the King of Norway ; and that he should be made the King's lenderman, or even earl over the country, in reward of this service. Whatever may have been Snorre Sturlason's ambition or want of principle, no grounds for this charge appear in his life. The subjection of Iceland to the crown of Norway was, on the contrary, carried into effect two years after his murder by his personal enemies ; and the event may rather be considered the inevitable result of the changes which had taken place in the social condition, military spirit, and arrangements and relative importance of different countries, about the middle of the thirteenth century, than the consequence of any conspiracy or treachery. Snorre returned to Reykholt, and, divorcing his first wife,



married his second, for the sake, it is alleged, of her large fortune, and became the richest, and probably the most unhappy, man of his day in Iceland. He was involved in disputes and lawsuits with his sons and his wife's family, who appear to have had just and legal claims to their shares of the properties which he continued to keep in his own possession. He appears to have visited Norway once, if not twice again, before or about the year 1237, and to have attached himself to the party of Duke Skule, who had claims on the succession to the crown of Norway. In 1237 Snorre returned to Iceland, and Duke Skule assumed the title of king at Throndhjem, in opposition to his son-in-law, King Hakon Hakonson; but in the following year he and his son were slain. Snorre Sturlason, as a friend or adherent of Duke Skule, was declared a traitor by King Hakon. As the king's chamberlain, he might in that age, although not a Norwegian subject, be considered a traitor. Letters from the king were issued to his enemies to bring him prisoner to Norway, or to put him to death; and on this authority his relations, with whom he was in enmity in a family feud,—his three sons-in-law, Gissur, Kolbein, and Arne,—came by night, in September 1241, to his residence at Reykholt, and murdered him in the 63rd year of his age. The same party, two years afterwards, brought Iceland under subjection to the crown of Norway. It seems unjust to throw upon the memory of Snorre Sturlason, as far as the circumstances can be made out, the imputation of having sought to betray the

independence of his country, when no overt act of his appears to have tended to that result, and when his enemies, who assassinated him, and from whom alone any account of his life proceeds, were avowedly the parties who brought it about. But it cannot be denied that their accounts, and even their enmity, prove that Snorre has been a man unjust to and hated by his family,—selfish, rapacious, and without restraint from principle or natural affection.

The judgment for posterity to come to probably is, that Snorre Sturlason, and even his relations who murdered him, were rather a type of the age in which they lived than individuals particularly prominent for wickedness in that age. The moral influences of Christianity had not yet taken root among the Northmen, while the rude virtues of their barbarous pagan forefathers were extinct. The island of Iceland had never contained above sixty-three or sixty-four thousand inhabitants—the population of an ordinary town. The providing of food, fuel, and of winter provender for their cattle, and such employments, have necessarily at all times occupied a much greater proportion of the population than in more favoured climes. The enterprising, energetic, and restless spirits found occupation abroad in the roving viking expeditions of the Norwegians, for the Icelanders themselves fitted out no viking expeditions; while the equally ambitious, but more peaceful and cultivated, appear to have acquired property and honour, as skalds, in no inconsiderable number. But the rise of the Hanseatic League, and the advance of the south and west of

Europe in civilisation, trade, and naval power, had extinguished the vikings on the sea. They were no longer, in public estimation, exercising an allowable or honourable profession ; but were treated as common robbers, and punished. The diffusion of Christianity, and of a lettered clergy over the Scandinavian peninsula, had in the same age superseded the skalds, even as recorders of law or history. The skald, with his saga and his traditional verses, gave way at once before the clerk, with his paper, pen, and ink. Both occupations—that of the viking and of the skald—fell as it were at once, and in one generation—in the end of the twelfth and beginning of the thirteenth century ; and the wild, unquiet, ambitious spirits, in the small Icelandic population, which were formerly absorbed by them, were thrown back into their native island, and there, like tigers shut up together in a den, they preyed on or worried each other. In Scandinavia itself the same causes produced in that age the same effects. The Birki-beins and the Baglers, who, from the middle of Magnus Erlingson's reign, raised their leaders alternately to the Norwegian crown, were in reality the vikings, driven from the seas to the forests,—were the daring, the idle, the active of society, who could find no living or employment in the ordinary occupations of husbandry, which were preoccupied by the ordinary agricultural population, nor in the few branches of manufacture or commerce then exercised as means of subsistence ; and whose former occupations of piracy at sea, or marauding expeditions on

land under foreign vikings, was cut off by the progress of Christian influences on conduct,—of the power of law, and of the nāval, military, and commercial arrangements in all other countries. The employments and means of living peaceably were not increased so rapidly as the employment given by private warfare on sea and land had been put down; and in all Europe there was an overpopulation, in proportion to the means of earning a peaceful livelihood, which produced the most dreadful disorders in society. This was probably the main cause of the unquiet, unsettled state of every country, from the eleventh century to the fifteenth. The Crusades even appear to have been fed not more by fanaticism than by this want of employment at home in every country. Law and social order were beginning to prevail, and to put down private wars, and the claim of every petty baron to garrison his robber nest and pillage the weak; but this growing security had not advanced so far that trade and manufacture could absorb, and give a living to, the men not wanted in agricultural and thrown out of military employment. It takes a long time, apparently, before those tastes and habits of a nation on which manufactures and commerce are founded, can be raised. Society was in a transition state. The countries which took but little part in the Crusades,—such as Scotland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and this little population of Iceland,—and which had no outlet for the unquiet spirits reared in private wars or piracy, present a deplorable state of society for many generations. A

bad, unquiet, cut-throat spirit, was transmitted to succeeding generations, and kept those countries in a half-barbarous state to a much later period than the other countries which had got rid of a prior turbulent generation in the Crusades. The Sturlunga Saga, or account of Snorre and his family, contains little else but a recital of private feuds in Iceland,—of murders, burning of houses, treachery, and a social disorganisation among this handful of people, which might well excuse Snorre Sturlason if he had wished and attempted to obtain the common benefit of all social union—the security of life and property—by the surrender of a nominal independence, but a real anarchy, into the hands of a government strong enough to make laws respected.

Snorre Sturlason must be measured, not by our scale of moral and social worth, but by the scale of his own times. Measured by that scale, he will be judged to have been a man of great but rough energy of mind,—of strong selfishness, rapacity, and passions unrestrained by any moral, religious, or social consideration,—a bold, bad, unprincipled man, of intellectual powers and cultivation far above any of his contemporaries whose literary productions have reached us,—a specimen of the best and worst in the characters of men in that transition-age from barbarism to civilisation,—a type of the times, a man rough, wild, vigorous in thought and deed, like the men he describes in his Chronicle.

How, it may fairly be asked, could a work of such literary merit as the translator claims for

Snorre Sturlason's Chronicle, have lain hid so long from English readers, and have been valued, even on the Continent, only by a few antiquaries in search of small facts connected with Danish history? The *Heimskringla* has been hardly used by the learned men of the period in which it was first published. It appeared first in the literary world in 1697, frozen into the Latin of the Swedish antiquary Peringskiöld. A Swedish translation, indeed, as well as a Latin, accompanied the Icelandic text; but the Swedish language was then, and is now, scarcely more known than the Icelandic in the fields of European literature. Modern Latin, or Latin applied to subjects beyond its own classical range, is a very imperfect medium for conveying realities to the mind, and, like algebra, presents only equivalents for things or words,—not the living words and impressions themselves. It may be an advantage in science, law, metaphysics, to work with the dead terms of a dead fixed language; but in all that addresses itself to the fancy, taste, or sympathy of men, the dead languages are dead indeed, and do not convey ideas vividly to the mind like the words of a living tongue belonging to existing realities. Conceive Shakespeare translated into Latin, or Schiller, or Sir Walter Scott! Would the scholar the most versed in that language have the slightest idea of those authors, or of their merits? About the time also when Peringskiöld published the *Heimskringla*, antiquarian research was, and still continues to be, the principal literary

occupation of the educated classes in Sweden and Denmark, and that which led, more than any other branch of literature, to distinction and substantial reward from government. Peringskiöld, Torfæus, Arne Magnusen, Schöning, and many other antiquaries of great learning, research, and talent in their own antiquarian pursuits, dug for celebrity in this mine of the *Heimskringla*, and generally threw away the sterling ore to bring home the worthless pebble. Dates were determined, localities ascertained, royal genealogies put to rights,—the ancestor of the Danish dynasty proved, to the satisfaction of all men, to have been a descendant of Odin called Skiöld, and not Dan,—and a great deal of such learned dust was raised, swept into a heap, and valued as dust of gold; but the historical interest, the social condition, the political institutions of the Northmen, as delineated in the *Heimskringla*, were not laid before the public by those great antiquaries: and possibly these were subjects of which they could not safely treat. These profound scholars, so laboriously and successfully occupied, appear to have forgotten altogether, in their zeal to do each other justice, and amidst the compliments they were interchanging on their own merits, that there was a Snorre Sturlason entitled to his share in the honours. His work was treated as some of the classics have been by their learned commentators—the text overwhelmed, buried, and forgotten, under annotations and unimportant explanations of it. It is pleasing to observe how the natural taste of a

people selects what is good in their literature, what is adapted to the mind of all, with more just tact than even the educated classes among them. While the merit of Snorre was hid from the educated under a mass of learned rubbish, the people both in Norway and Denmark had a true feeling for it; and in 1594 a translation into Danish of parts of the Heimskringla \* was published in Denmark by Mortensen.

In 1590 a priest, Peter Claussen,—himself as wild a manslaying priest as the priest Thangbrand, or any other of the rough energetic personages in the work of Snorre,—translated the Heimskringla for the benefit of his countrymen in Norway, the language of Snorre having become obsolete, or at least obscure, even to the Norwegian peasantry. His translation was published in 1633 by Ole Worm, and it became a house-book among the Norwegian bondes.

At the present day, in the dwellings of the remote valleys, especially of the Throndhjem district,—such

\* The copy of the Heimskringla made in 1230 by Snorre's nephew, Sturla, is considered the ground text from which all the other manuscripts have been made; and copies in writing of his work have been made as late as 1567. The exact date of any of the manuscripts used by Mortensen in 1594, or by Claussen in 1590, printed by Wormius in 1663, or by Peringskiöld in 1697, is not ascertained. They appear to have all had different manuscripts before them; some better, apparently, in some parts, and in others not so perfect. The Heimskringla of Schöning, in folio,—the first volume published in 1777, the last in 1826, in Icelandic, Latin, and Danish at Copenhagen,—is the best.—L.

Since the above was written a text edition has been published in Christiania by C. R. Unger, 1868, and another in Upsala by N. Linder and K. A. Hagson, 1870. Several translations have appeared in various languages. See editor's preface.



as Stordal, Veerdal, Indal,—a well-used copy of some saga, generally that of King Olaf the Saint, reprinted from Peter Claussen's work, will be found along with the Bible, Prayer Book, Christian the Fourth's Law Book, and the Storthing's Transactions, to be the housefather's library. During a winter passed in one of those valleys, the translator, in the course of acquiring the language of the country, borrowed one of those books from his neighbour Arne of Ostgrunden, a bonde or peasant-proprietor of a farm so called. It was the saga of King Olaf the Saint. Reading it in the midst of the historical localities, and of the very houses and descendants of the very men presented to you in the stirring scenes of this saga at the battle of Stiklestad, he may very probably have imbibed an interest which he cannot impart to readers unacquainted with the country, the people, and their social state. He read with delight the account of old manners and ways of living given in the saga,—old, yet not without much resemblance to what still exists in ordinary family life among the bondes. He found, from knowing the localities, the charm of truth from internal evidence in the narratives of that saga. It is not unlikely that these favourable circumstances may have given the translator a higher impression of the literary merit of the Heimskringla than others may receive from it. He was not aware at the time that the volume which delighted him was but a translation of a single saga from Snorre Sturlason's work into a Norse which itself was becoming obsolete, and

like the Scotch of Lindsay of Pitscottie's Chronicle, was in some degree a forgotten language even among the peasantry. It has since been the occasional and agreeable occupation of his leisure hours to study the work of Snorre in the original. To much knowledge of, or familiarity with the Icelandic he cannot lay any claim. To get at the meaning and spirit of the text, helping himself over the difficulties, which generally only lay in his own ignorance of the language, by collating every passage he was in doubt about with the meaning given to it in the translations of Peringskiöld, Schöning, and Aal, and to give a plain faithful translation into English of the *Heimskringla*, unencumbered with antiquarian research, and suited to the plain English reader, has been his object.

The short pieces of skaldic poetry which Snorre intermixes with his narrative, and quotes as his authorities for the facts he is telling, are very difficult to deal with in a translation. They are not without a rude grandeur of imagery, and a truthfulness in description of battles and sea-fights; and they have a simplicity which, although often flat, is often natural and impressive. They have probably been originally delivered *vivâ voce* in recitative, so that the voice, adroitly managed, would form a measure. Icelandic poetry does not, like the Greek or Latin, differ from prose by certain measures or feet in a verse, but has a formation peculiar to itself. All Icelandic poems, or almost all, are divided into strophes consisting of eight

lines. The strophe is further subdivided into two half-strophes, and each of these again into two parts. Each part is a fourth of the whole strophe, and contains two verses or lines. The first of these lines is called the fore line and the second the back line; and the two are connected together, as verses, by rhyme-letters, or rhyme-syllables. This rhyme-letter, or alliteration, consists in having two words in the fore line beginning with the same initial letter; and a third word, that which is the most important in the meaning, in the second or back line, and beginning with the same letter. For example:—

“Farvel fagnadar  
Fold og heilla.”

“Farewell, favoured  
Fold (land) and holy.”

The letter F in the word Fold is the head letter of the alliteration, and the same letter in Farvel and fagnadar are the two subsidiary alliterative sounds in the first line. In the use of this alliteration there are several subdivisions, from exceptions or limitations to the general principle. Besides this alliteration or letter-rhyme, there are syllable-rhymes, in which the first syllables of words, instead of the first letters only, form, by their collocation in the fore and back lines, the versification; and if the first syllables rhyme together, the last may be different sounds. Thus, merki and sterka, or gumar and sumir, are perfect syllable-rhymes in a line. End-

rhymes, as in the other Gothic languages, are also used in Icelandic versification, connected also always with the alliterative and syllabic rhymes. Thus :—

“Nu er hersis hefnd,  
Vid hilmi efnd.  
Gengr ulfr ok ærn  
Af ynglings bærn.”

The two lines only rhyme together, in Icelandic versification, which are connected by the rules of alliterative verse,—viz., the first and second, and the third and fourth; but the first and third, or second and fourth, are never made to rhyme together. Longer verse-lines than of eight syllables are not used, and lines of three or six appear more common. A short measure, admitting of no pause or cæsura in the middle of the line, appears to have been most agreeable to the Icelandic ear, or mode of recitative in which the skalds have chanted their verses. These observations are taken from Rask's “Veiledning til det Islandske Sprog, 1811;” in which there is a valuable dissertation on the Icelandic versification, with examples of the different kinds of verses. Some later Icelandic scholars are of opinion that what Rask has treated as two lines, on the supposition that the Icelandic versification had no cæsura, had in reality been one line, with the cæsura marked by a rhyme corresponding to the end-rhyme of the line, which middle rhyme is of common occurrence in old English verses.

For example, in the following old English verses on the bee, the line is not concluded at the rhyme

in the middle, which marks a strong cæsura or pause, not a total want of it:—

“In winter daies, when Phœbus’ raies  
Are hid with misty cloud,  
And stormy showers assault her bowers,  
And cause her for to crowd.”

*Baret’s Alvearia, 1580.*

And also in the Latin rhymes of the monks in the Middle Ages, as for instance in these—

“Omnia terrena per vices sunt aliena.  
Nunc mei nunc hujus, post mortem nescio cujus,”

the rhyme by no means concludes the line. The mode of writing on parchment or paper has, for economy of the material, been in continuous lines, like prose, without any division, in the manuscripts of old date; so that nothing can be concluded from the writing concerning the length or forms of the verses. Whether the skalds adapted their verses to music, or tunes, seems not well ascertained. Little mention, if any, is made in any of the sagas of tunes, or musical instruments; yet they have had songs. All their pieces are called songs, and are said to be sung, and many of them evidently were intended to be sung. We find mention also of old songs; for instance, the “Biarkamal,” was instantly recognised by the whole army at Stiklestad. They must have had tunes for these songs. We find also a refrain, or chorus to songs, mentioned. All, perhaps, that can be safely said of Icelandic versification is, that the system has been very artificial, and full of technical difficulties in the

construction; and, independently of the beauties of poetic spirit and ideas, may have had the merit of technical difficulties in the verse adroitly overcome by the skald,—a merit which it would be going too far to condemn, because we, with minds and ears not trained in the same way, cannot feel it. How much of our own most esteemed poetry gives us pleasure from similar conventional sources distinct altogether from poetical imagery, or ideas which all men of all countries and ages would relish and feel pleasure from? There may also have been a harmony and measured cadence given by the voice in reciting or chanting such verses—and they were composed to be recited, not silently read—which are lost to us. All we can judge of them is, that if such verses could be constructed in the English language, they would be without harmony or other essential property of verse to us; as our minds, ears, and the genius of our language are formed in a different mould. Besides, the peculiarities of the construction of the verse, the poetical language, and the allusions to the Odin mythology, are so obscure, involved, and far-fetched, that volumes of explanation would be necessary almost for every line in any verbatim translation. Torfæus, who was himself an Icelfander, and was unquestionably the first of northern antiquaries, declares that much of the skaldic poetry is so obscure, that no meaning at all can be twisted out of it by the most intense study. The older and younger Eddas were in fact handbooks composed expressly for explaining the

mythological allusions and metaphors occurring in the poetry of the skalds; so that this obscurity and difficulty appear to have been felt even before the Odin worship was totally extinct, and its mythology forgotten. Examples will best illustrate the obscurity of allusion. In the verses composed by Berse, quoted in the forty-eighth chapter of Olaf the Saint's Saga, in the sixth line, the literal translation of the text would be, "Giver of the fire of the ship's out-field." The "out-field" of the ship is the ocean which surrounds a ship, as the out-field surrounds a farm. The fire of the ocean is gold; because Ægir, when he received the gods into his hall in the depths of the ocean, lighted it with gold hung round instead of the sun's rays; and hence the ocean's rays is a common poetical term for gold in the skaldic poetry. Now "the giver of the fire of the ship's out-field" means the giver of gold, the generous king. Another example of the obscurity of allusion is in the first line of the verses quoted in the twenty-first chapter of Olaf Trygvesson's Saga. In the original the expression is literally, "Hater of the bow-seat's fire." Now the bow-seat is the hand which carries the bow; its fire is the gold which adorns the hand in rings or bracelets; and the hater of this fire is the man who hates to keep it, who gives it away,—the generous man. Every piece almost of the skaldic poetry quoted in the *Heimskringla* has allusions of this obscure kind, which would be unintelligible without voluminous explanation; and yet the character of

these short poetical pieces does not consist in these, which seem to be but expletives for filling out their artificial structure of verses, but in their rude simplicity and wild grandeur. The translator intended at first to have left out these pieces of skaldic poetry altogether. They are not essential to Snorre's prose narrative of the events to which they refer. They are not even authorities for the facts he details, although he quotes them in that view; for they only give the summary or heads of events of which he gives the particular minute accounts. They appear to be catch-words, or preliminary verses, for aiding the memory in recurring to some long account or saga in prose of which they are the compendium or text. The oldest translator of Snorre's work, Peter Claussen, who is supposed to have had, in 1590, a manuscript to translate from which is now lost, omits altogether the verses. The translator consulted a literary friend,—his son, Mr. S. Laing, late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, now of the Railroad Department of the Board of Trade,—and went over with him the translation of the prose narrative of Snorre, and translations into prose of the poetical pieces connected with it. They came to the conclusion that although these pieces of skaldic poetry are not essential to Snorre's prose narrative of the historical events to which they refer, they are essential to the spirit and character of Snorre's work. However obscure, unpoetical, monotonous in the ideas, or uninteresting and flat they may be, they show the mind, spirit, and intellectual state of the age and



people,—show what it was they considered poetry ; and the poorest of these compositions have, in this view, great historical interest. Many of them are, especially in the descriptions and imagery connected with the warfare of those times, highly poetical ; and, under any forms of verse and language, the “Hakon-armal,” chapter 33 of Hakon the Good’s Saga, the “Biarkamal,” chapter 220 of Saint Olaf’s Saga, and many of the pieces of Sigvat the Skald and others, would be acknowledged as genuine poetry. On examining more closely these pieces of skaldic poetry it appears, in general, that the second half of the strophe of eight lines, which their rules of versification required as the length of their poetical pieces, is but a repetition of the idea of the first half, and the second two lines but an echo of the first two. The whole meaning—all that the skald has to say in the strophe, is very often comprehended within the first two lines, the fore line and back line, which are connected together by the alliterative letters or syllables ; and the one idea is expanded, only in other words, over the whole surface of the rest of the strophe of eight lines. The extraordinary metaphors and mythological allusions, the epithets so long-winded and obscure, the never-ending imagery of wolves glutted and ravens feasted by the deeds of the warriors, arise evidently from the necessity imposed on the skald of finding alliteratives, and conforming to the other strict rules of their versification. The beauty of this artificial construction is lost even upon the best Icelandic scholars of our times ; and

it appears to have been the only beauty many of these pieces of poetry ever pretended to, for the ideas so expressed are often not in any way poetical. Grundtvig, in his translation into Danish of the *Heimskringla*, and some German translators of skaldic poems, have cut the loop of this difficulty. They have taken only the most poetical of the pieces of the skalds, and have freely translated, or freely paraphrased them into modern ballads, or songs, in modern measures. Grundtvig has done so with great poetic genius and spirit; and his translations have justly placed him in the first rank of Danish poets. Many of his translations might be placed by the side of the best pieces of Burger or of Scott in the ballad style; but then they are Grundtvig's, not the skalds'. They are no more a translation of the verses of the skalds quoted by Snorre Sturlason, than Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a translation of the story of *Hamlet* in Saxo Grammaticus.

The translator and Mr. S. Laing have rendered into English verse these skaldic pieces of poetry, from prose translations of them laboriously made out. The ideas in each strophe, the allusions, and imagery, were first ascertained by collating the Norse translation of them in M. Jacob Aal's excellent translation of the *Heimskringla* published in 1838, and those in the folio edition of 1777, and the Latin prose translation of them by Thorlacius and Werlauff, in the sixth volume of that edition, published in 1826, with the Icelandic text.\* The ideas, allu-

\* The versions of Jacob Aal and Thorlacius and Werlauff into the

sions, and imagery are, much oftener than could be expected, obtained, and rendered line for line ; and the meaning of each half strophe is always, it is believed, given in the corresponding four English verses. The English reader, it is hoped, will thus be better able to form an idea of the poetry of the skalds, than if the translators had been more ambitious, and had given a looser paraphrase of these pieces according to their own taste or fancy. Some of these pieces of skaldic poetry, it will be seen even by this dim reflection, have very considerable poetical merit ; many, again, are extremely flat and prosaic, and are merely prose ideas cut into the shape of verse by the skald. These, it must be recollected, may have had their beauty and merit in the technical construction of the verse, and may have been very pleasing and harmonious, although such merit is lost upon us in a different language. The ideas are all we can get at ; not the forms and technical beauties of the expression of those ideas. It will not escape the observation of the English reader that in the ideas there is a very tedious monotony, in the descriptions of battles and bloodshed, in the imagery of war, in the epithets applied to the warriors and kings ; and in general there is a total want of sentiment or feeling. The spirit is altogether material. The skalds deal only in description of material objects, and mainly of those connected with warfare by sea

cognate Northern tongue are much more graphic than the Latin, and more true to the spirit of the Icelandic. These versions have been referred to for the meaning of the skald in all cases in which the Icelandic was obscure.—L.

or land. But this, no doubt, belongs to the spirit of the state of society and times; and it will be considered of some importance to know what the ideas were which were then considered poetical, and which pleased the cultivated classes for whom the skalds composed. The English public will be able, in some degree, from these translations, to judge what the poetry of the skalds was,—what may have been its real poetic merit: of the labour and difficulty of presenting these pieces to the public, even in this imperfect way, none can judge but those who will try the same task.

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# THE HEIMSKRINGLA ;

OR,

## CHRONICLE OF THE KINGS OF NORWAY.

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### PREFACE OF SNORRE STURLASON.\*

IN this book I have had old stories written down, as I have heard them told by intelligent people, concerning chiefs who have held dominion in the northern countries,† and who spoke the Danish

\* Gudbrand Vigfusson has shown, in his *Prolegomena* to his edition of *Sturlunga Saga* (Oxford, 1878), that Are Frode and not Snorre is the author of this Preface. That part only which gives the life of Are is written by Snorre. Indeed, Vigfusson takes the *Ynglinga Saga* to be "the very work of Are, abridged here and there, but still preserving in many chapters (especially those which depict the life and rites of the heathen days) his characteristic words." He believes the *Ynglinga Saga* to be a reproduction of Are's *Konunga-bok* (Book of Kings).

"It (the Book of Kings) has perished," says Vigfusson, "except so far as it is embodied in Snorre's work, in which we can detect some fragments of it apparently verbally cited—*e.g.*, the preface, 'á bók þessi' . . . which certainly cannot be ascribed to Snorre, as Gísli Brynjúlfsson long ago maintained. The writer repeatedly speaks of *viva voce* sources, never of books : 'As I have heard wise men say,' 'As I have been told, 'old traditions' (*fornar frásagnir*), 'poems' (*kvæði*), 'epic lays' (*söguljóð*) used for entertainment—these are his sources. He also speaks of *Langfæðgatal*, by which we take him to mean genealogical lays, which indeed were especially styled *tal* (*Ynglingatal*, *Haleyggatal*). All this is in good keeping with Are and his age ; when Snorre wrote a century later, a whole cycle of written sagas had sprung up, whilst tradition had at the same rate died away, or was becoming extinct."

† That is to say, in all the three northern countries, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.

tongue; and also concerning some of their family branches, according to what has been told me. Some of this is found in ancient family registers, in which the pedigrees of kings and other personages of high birth are reckoned up, and part is written down after old songs and ballads which our forefathers had for their amusement. Now, although we cannot just say what truth there may be in these, yet we have the certainty that old and wise men held them to be true.

Thiodolf\* of Hvin† was the skald of Harald Harfager, and he composed a poem for King Ragnvald the Mountain-high, which is called “Ynglingatal.” This Ragnvald was a son of Olaf Geirstada-Alf, the brother of King Halfdan the Black. In this poem thirty of his forefathers are reckoned up, and the death and burial-place of each are given. He begins with Fiolner, a son of Ingvefrey, whom the Swedes, long after his time, worshipped and sacrificed to, and from whom the race or family of the Ynglings take their name.

\* Family surnames were not in use, and scarcely are so now, among the Northmen. Olaf the son of Harald was called Olaf Haraldson; Olaf's son Magnus, Magnus Olafson; and his son Hakon, Hakon Magnuson: thus dropping altogether any common name with the family predecessors. This custom necessarily made the tracing of family connection difficult, and dependent upon the memory of skalds or others. The appellations Fair-haired, Black, &c., have been given to help in distinguishing individuals of the same name from each other. Hinn Frodi the Wise, the Much-knowing,—the Polyhistor, as it is translated into Latin by the antiquarians,—is applied to many persons; and is possibly connected with the old Norman French appellation Prud-Prud'homme.—L.

† Hvin, now Kvinesdal, in Norway. Thiodolf composed, besides Ynglingatal, also the poem Haustlong. He is mentioned in Harald Harfager's Saga.

Eyvind Skaldaspiller\* also reckoned up the ancestors of Earl Hakon the Great in a poem called "Haleygíatal," composed about Hakon; and therein he mentions Saming, a son of Ingvefrey,† and he likewise tells of the death and funeral rites of each. The lives and times of the Yngling race were written from Thiodolf's relation enlarged afterwards by the accounts of intelligent people.

As to funeral rites, the earliest age is called the Age of Burning; because all the dead were consumed by fire, and over their ashes were raised standing stones.‡ But after Frey was buried under a cairn at Upsala,§ many chiefs raised cairns, as commonly as stones, to the memory of their relatives.

The Age of Cairns began properly in Denmark after Dan Mikillate || had raised for himself a burial-cairn, and ordered that he should be buried in it on his death, with his royal ornaments and armour, his horse and saddle-furniture, and other valuable goods; and many of his descendants followed his example. But the burning of the dead continued, long after that time, to be the custom of the Swedes and

\* Skaldaspiller=skald-spoiler, a poetaster or plagiarist. Vigfusson, *s.v.*, believes this nickname was given to Eyvind because two of his chief poems were modelled after contemporary poets, the Haleygíatal after the Ynglingatal, and the Hakonarmal after the Eiríksmal.

† Doubtless an error in copying, as chapter 9 of the Ynglinga Saga names Njord as Saming's father.

‡ Bauta-Steinar are in Scotland called standing stones by the common people, and we have no other word in our language for those monuments.—L.

§ Uppsälir, the High Halls, was not the present city of Upsala; but Gamle Upsala, two miles north of the present Upsala.—L.

|| Mikil-lati—the Magnificent (*superbus*).—L.

Northmen.\* Iceland was occupied in the time that Harald Harfager was the King of Norway.† There were skalds in Harald's court whose poems the people know by heart even at the present day, together with all the songs about the kings who have ruled in Norway since his time; and we rest the foundations of our story principally upon the songs which were sung in the presence of the chiefs themselves or of their sons, and take all to be true that is found in such poems about their feats and battles: for although it be the fashion with skalds to praise most those in whose presence they are standing, yet no one would dare to relate to a chief what he, and all those who heard it, knew to be a false and imaginary, not a true account of his deeds; because that would be mockery, not praise.

#### OF THE PRIEST ARE FRODE.

The priest Are Frode‡ (the learned), a son of Thorgils the son of Geller, was the first man in this country§ who wrote down in the Norse language narratives of events both old and new. In the beginning of his book he wrote principally about the first settlements in Iceland, the laws and government, and next of the lagmen,|| and how long each

\* As Vigfusson has pointed out, this statement is incorrect, and is refuted by Havamal and by the monuments. The great bulk of the bauta stones belong to the eleventh and even the twelfth century.

† The occupation of Iceland is usually given as taking place in the year 874.

‡ Are Frode was born in Iceland 1068, and died Nov. 9, 1148.—L.

§ That is, in Iceland.

|| Lagmen were district judges appointed by the Things to administer the law.—L.



had administered the law; and he reckoned the years at first, until the time when Christianity was introduced into Iceland, and afterwards reckoned from that to his own times. To this he added many other subjects, such as the lives and times of kings of Norway\* and Denmark, and also of England; besides accounts of great events which have taken place in this country itself. His narratives are considered by many men of knowledge to be the most remarkable of all; because he was a man of good understanding, and so old that his birth was as far back as the year after Harald Sigurdson's fall.† He wrote, as he himself says, the lives and times of the kings of Norway from the report of Od Kolson, a grandson of Hal of Sida. Od again took his information from Thorgeir Afradskol, who was an intelligent man, and so old that when Earl Hakon the Great was killed he was dwelling at Nidarnes—the same place at which King Olaf Trygvesson afterwards laid the foundation of the merchant town of Nidaros (i.e. Throndhjem) which is now there. The priest Are came, when seven years old, to Haukadal ‡ to Hal Thorarinson, and was there fourteen years. Hal was a man of great knowledge and of excellent memory; and he could even remember being baptized, when he was three years old, by the priest Thangbrand, the year before Christianity was established by law in Iceland. Are was twelve years

\* The ancient name of Norway was *Norvegr* or *Noregr*, probably originally *Nordvegr* or *Nordrvegr*, the North way.

† Consequently in the year 1067.

‡ In the south of Iceland.

of age when Bishop Isleif\* died, and at his death eighty years had elapsed since the fall of Olaf Trygvesson. Hal died nine years later than Bishop Isleif,† and had attained nearly the age of ninety-four years. Hal had traded between the two countries, and had enjoyed intercourse with King Olaf the Saint, by which he had gained greatly in reputation, and he had become well acquainted with the kingdom of Norway. He had fixed his residence in Haukadal when he was thirty years of age, and he had dwelt there sixty-four years, as Are tells us. Teit, a son of Bishop Isleif, was fostered in the house of Hal at Haukadal, and afterwards dwelt there himself. He taught Are the priest, and gave him information about many circumstances which Are afterwards wrote down. Are also got many a piece of information from Thurid, a daughter of the gode‡ Snorre.§ She was wise and intelligent, and remembered her father Snorre, who was nearly thirty-five years of age when Christianity was introduced into Iceland, and died a year after King Olaf the Saint's fall.|| So it is not wonderful that Are the priest had good information about ancient events both here in Iceland, and abroad, being a man

\* Isleif was the first bishop of Iceland, and had studied at Erfurth in Germany, and died 1080.—L.

† Consequently in the year 1089.

‡ Godes were priests and judges, and an hereditary class, apparently, in Iceland in the heathen time. But we hear little or nothing of such a priesthood in Norway; nor is it clear what their civil jurisdiction may have been in Iceland compared to that of the lagmen, or whether the godes, originally the priests by hereditary right, as descendants of Odin's twelve diar, were not ex officio the lagmen or judges also.—L.

§ Snorre Gode was born 964 and died 1031.

|| This happened 1030.—L.

anxious for information, intelligent and of excellent memory, and having besides learned much from old intelligent persons. But the songs seem to me most reliable if they are sung correctly, and judiciously interpreted.

## I.

## YNGLINGA SAGA ;

OR, THE STORY OF THE YNGLING FAMILY FROM ODIN TO  
HALFDAN THE BLACK.

CHAPTER I.—*Of the Situation of Countries.*

IT is said that the earth's circle which the human race inhabits is torn across into many bights, so that great seas run into the land from the out-ocean. Thus it is known that a great sea goes in at Niorvasund,\* and up to the land of Jerusalem. From the same sea a long sea-bight stretches towards the north-east, and is called the Black Sea, and divides the three parts of the earth; of which the eastern part is called Asia, and the western is called by some Europa, by some Enea. Northward of the Black Sea lies Svithiod the great,† or the Cold. The Great Svithiod is reckoned by some not less than the great Serkland;‡ others compare it to the Great Blueland.§ The northern part of Svithiod lies

\* Niorvasund, the Straits of Gibraltar; Niorvasund was for the first time passed by a Norseman (Skopte) A.D. 1099.

† Svithiod the Great, or the Cold, is the ancient Scythia; and is also called Godheim in the mythological sagas, or the home of Odin and the other gods. Svithiod the Less is Sweden proper, and is called Manheim, or the home of the kings the descendants of these gods.—L.

‡ Serkland means North Africa and Spain, and the countries of the Saracens in Asia.—L.

§ Blaland, the country of the blacks in Africa.—L.

uninhabited on account of frost and cold, as likewise the southern parts of Blueland are waste from the burning of the sun. In Svithiod are many great domains, and many wonderful races of men, and many kinds of languages. There are giants, and there are dwarfs, and there are also blue men. There are wild beasts, and dreadfully large dragons. On the north side of the mountains which lie outside of all inhabited lands runs a river through Svithiod, which is properly called by the name of Tanais,\* but was formerly called Tanaquisl,† or Vanaquisl, and which falls into the ocean at the Black Sea. The country of the people on the Vanaquisl was called Vanaland, or Vanaheim;‡ and the river separates the three parts of the world, of which the easternmost part is called Asia, and the westernmost Europe.

## CHAPTER II.—*Of the People of Asia.*

The country east of the Tanaquisl in Asia was called Asaland, or Asaheim, and the chief city in that land was called Asgard.§ In that city was a chief called Odin, and it was a great place for sacrifice. It was the custom there that twelve temple godes ||

\* Tanais is the river Don.

† Quisl, means a branch of a river at its mouth.

‡ Vanaheim belongs exclusively to the domain of mythology. See Anderson's "Norse Mythology."

§ Asgard is supposed by those who look for historical fact in mythological tales to be the present Assor; others that it is Chasgar in the Caucasian ridge, called by Strabo Aspurgum—the Asburg or castle of Aas; which word Aas still remains in the northern languages, signifying a ridge of high land. The word belongs exclusively to mythology—L.

|| Hof godes, whose office of priests and judges continued hereditary in Scandinavia.—L.

should both direct the sacrifices, and also judge the people. They were called Diar, or Drotnar, and all the people served and obeyed them. 'Odin was a great and very far-travelled warrior, who conquered many kingdoms, and so successful was he that in every battle the victory was on his side. It was the belief of his people that victory belonged to him in every battle. It was his custom when he sent his men into battle, or on any expedition, that he first laid his hand upon their heads, and called down a blessing\* upon them; and then they believed their undertaking would be successful. His people also were accustomed, whenever they fell into danger by land or sea, to call upon his name; and they thought that always they got comfort and aid by it, for where he was they thought help was near. Often he went away so long that he passed many seasons on his journeys.

### CHAPTER III.—*Of Odin's Brothers.*

Odin had two brothers, the one called Ve, the other Vile, and they governed the kingdom when he was absent. It happened once when Odin had gone to a great distance, and had been so long away that the Asas doubted if he would ever return home, that his two brothers took it upon themselves to

\* The word in the original is *bianak*, a word foreign to the Scandinavian tongues, and supposed to mean *blessing*; compare the Latin *benedictio*; the Scot. *bannock*, from Gael. *banagh*, an oat-cake.

divide his estate; but both of them took his wife Frigg to themselves. Odin soon after returned home, and took his wife back.\*

CHAPTER IV.—*Of Odin's War with the Vans.*

Odin went out with an army against the Vans; but they were well prepared, and defended their land, so that victory was changeable, and they ravaged the lands of each other, and did damage. They tired of this at last, and on both sides appointed a meeting for establishing peace, made a truce, and exchanged hostages. The Vans sent their best men, Niord the Rich, and his son Frey. The Asas sent a man called Hœner, whom they thought well suited to be a chief,† as he was a stout and very handsome man, and with him they sent a man of great understanding called Mimer; and on the other side the Vans sent the wisest man in their community, who was called Kvaser. Now, when Hœner came to Vanaheim he was immediately made a chief, and Mimer came to him with good counsel on all occasions. But when Hœner stood in the Things or other meetings, if

\* Much of the Ynglinga Saga will be found to belong to the domain of mythology. Ve and Vile (sanctity and will), Odin, the Asas, &c., are simply divinities made human. The editor refers the reader, in regard to all these mythological names, to his "Norse Mythology" and to his translation of Snorre's Younger Edda. The discrepancy between the mythological statements of the Ynglinga Saga and those of the Younger Edda, is properly noted by Vigfusson as a confirmation of his view that the Ynglinga is mainly the work of Are Frode.

† These exchanges appear not to have been of hostages, but of chiefs to be incorporated with the people to whom they were sent, and thus to preserve peace.—L.

Mimer was not near him, and any difficult matter was laid before him, he always answered in one way,—"Now let others give their advice;" so that the Vans got a suspicion that the Asas had deceived them in the exchange of men. They took Mimer, therefore, and beheaded him, and sent his head to the Asas. Odin took the head, smeared it with herbs so that it should not rot, and sang incantations over it. Thereby he gave it the power that it spoke to him, and discovered to him many secrets. Odin placed Niord and Frey as priests of the sacrifices, and they became deities of the Asas. Niord's daughter Freyja was priestess of the sacrifices, and first taught the Asas the magic art, as it was in use and fashion among the Vans. While Niord was with the Vans he had taken his own sister in marriage, for that he was allowed by their law; and their children were Frey and Freyja. But among the Asas it was forbidden to come together in so near relationship.

CHAPTER V.—*Odin Divides his Kingdom: Also concerning Gefion.*

There goes a great mountain barrier from north-east to south-west, which divides the Greater Svithiod from other kingdoms. South of this mountain ridge it is not far to Tyrkland,\* where

\* Tyrkland was the country of which the chief city was Troy. Tyrk may be a corruption of Teukrer. The tradition anent a descent from Troy was widely diffused in the Teutonic world, but had no foundation in fact.



Odin had great possessions. In those times the Roman chiefs went wide around in the world, subduing to themselves all people; and on this account many chiefs fled from their domains. But Odin having foreknowledge, and magic-sight, knew that his posterity would come to settle and dwell in the northern half of the world. Odin then set his brothers Ve and Vile over Asgard; and he himself, with all the gods and a great many other people, wandered out, first westward to Gardarike,\* and then south to Saxland.† He had many sons; and after having subdued an extensive kingdom in Saxland, he set his sons to defend the country. He himself went northwards to the sea, and took up his abode in an island which is called Odinse, in Fyen. Then he sent Gefion across the sound to the north, to discover new countries; and she came to King Gylfe, who gave her a ploughgate of land. Then she went to Jotunheim, and bore four sons to a giant, and transformed them into a yoke of oxen, and yoked them to a plough, and broke out the land into the ocean right opposite to Odinse, which land was called Seeland, where she afterwards settled and dwelt. Skiold, a son of Odin, married her, and they dwelt at Leire.‡ Where the ploughed land was is a lake or sea called Lag.§ In the Swedish

\* Gardarike is Russia.

† Saxland is Germany.

‡ Leire, or Hleire, or Leire, at the end of Isefiord, in the count of Ledreborg, is considered the oldest royal seat in Denmark. It is situated about one and a half Danish miles south west of Roekilde.—L.

§ Lag (Icelandic, lögr) means simply water or lake, but is also used as a proper noun to designate Lake Mælar in Sweden.

land the fiords of Lag correspond to the nesses in Seeland. Brage the Old \* sings thus of it : †—

“ Gefion from Gylfe drove away,  
To add new land to Denmark's sway,—  
Blythe Gefion ploughing in the smoke  
That steamed up from her oxen-yoke :  
Four heads, eight forehead stars had they,  
Bright gleaming, as she ploughed away ;  
Dragging new lands from the deep main  
To join them to the sweet isle's plain.”

Now when Odin heard that things were in a prosperous condition in Gylfe's land to the east, he went thither, and Gylfe made a peace with him, for Gylfe thought he had no strength to oppose the Asas. Odin and Gylfe had many tricks and enchantments against each other; but the Asas had always the superiority. Odin took up his residence at the lake Lag, at the place now called Old Sigtuna. ‡ There he erected a large temple, where there were sacrifices according to the customs of the Asas. He appropriated to himself the whole of that district of country, and called it Sigtuna. § To the temple gods he gave also domains. Niord dwelt in Noatun, Frey in Upsala, Heimdal in Himinbjorg, Thor in Thrudvang, Balder in Breidablik; to all of them he gave good domains. ||

\* Brage the Old is supposed to have died about the year 800. He was skald at the court of King Bjorn at Hauge in Sweden.

† This fable is possibly the echo of some tradition of a convulsion in which the ocean broke into the Baltic through the Sound and Belts, or in which the island of Seeland was raised from the deep.—L.

‡ Situated near the present Sigtuna, across the lake, close by Signildsberg.

§ Sigtuna=Odin's town, Sige being one of Odin's names.

|| All these names except Upsala are found in Grimnismal in the Elder Edda.

CHAPTER VI.—*Of Odin's Accomplishments.*

When Asa-Odin came to the north, and the gods with him, it is truthfully stated that he began to exercise and teach others the arts which the people long afterwards have practised. Odin was the cleverest of all, and from him all the others learned their magic arts; and he knew them first, and knew many more than other people. But now, to tell why he is held in such high respect, we must mention various causes that contributed to it. When sitting among his friends his countenance was so beautiful and dignified, that the spirits of all were exhilarated by it; but when he was in war he appeared fierce and dreadful. This arose from his being able to change his colour and form in any way he liked. Another cause was, that he conversed so cleverly and smoothly, that all who heard were persuaded. He spoke everything in rhyme, such as now composed, and which we call skald-craft. He and his temple gods were called song-smiths, for from them came that art of song into the northern countries. Odin could make his enemies in battle blind, or deaf, or terror-struck, and their weapons so blunt that they could no more cut than a willow twig; on the other hand, his men rushed forwards without armour, were as mad as dogs or wolves, bit their shields, and were strong as bears or wild bulls, and killed people at a blow, and neither fire nor iron told upon them. This was called Berserk-gang.\*

\* *Ber-serkr*. We will here condense G. Vigfusson's explanation as

CHAPTER VII.—*Of Odin's Feats.*

Odin could transform his shape: his body would lie as if dead, or asleep; but then he would be in shape of a fish, or worm, or bird, or beast, and be off in a twinkling to distant lands upon his own or other people's business. With words alone he could quench fire, still the ocean in tempest, and turn the wind to any quarter he pleased. Odin had a ship which was called *Skidbladner*,\* in which he sailed over wide seas, and which he could roll up like

given in Cleasby's Icelandic-English Dictionary. "The etymology of the word has been much contested. Some, upon the authority of Snorre, 'his men rushed forward without armour,' derive it from '*ðerr*' (bare) and '*serkr*' (shirt), but this etymology is inadmissible, because '*serkr*' is a noun not an adjective. Others derive it from '*ðerr*' (bear=*ursus*), which is greatly to be preferred, for in olden ages athletes and champions used to wear hides of bears, wolves, and reindeer. The old poets so understood the word. In battle the berserks were subject to fits of frenzy called *berseks-gangr* (*furor bersericus*), when they howled like wild beasts, foamed at the mouth, and gnawed the iron rim of their shields. During these fits they were, according to popular belief, proof against steel and fire, and made great havoc in the ranks of the enemy; but when the fever abated they were weak and tame. A somewhat different sort of berserk is also recorded in Norway, as existing in gangs of professional bullies, roaming about from house to house, challenging husbandmen to *holmgang* (duel), extorting ransom, and in case of victory carrying off wives, sisters, or daughters; but in most cases the damsel is happily rescued by some travelling Iceland, who fights and kills the berserk. No berserk is described as a native of Iceland. The historians are anxious to state that those who appeared in Iceland were born Norse (or Swedes); and they were looked upon with fear and execration. That men of the heathen age were taken with fits of the '*furor athleticus*' is recorded in the case of Kveldulf in the Edda, and proved by the fact that the law set a penalty upon it. The author of *Ynglinga Saga* attributes the berserk-gang to Odin and his followers; but this is a sheer misinterpretation, or perhaps the whole passage is a rude paraphrase of *Havamal*, 149 *seq.* With the introduction of Christianity this championship disappeared altogether."

\* According to the Younger Edda, this ship belonged not to Odin but to Frey.

a cloth.\* Odin carried with him Mimer's head, which told him all the news of other countries. Sometimes even he called the dead out of the earth, or set himself under the gallows; whence he was called the ghost-sovereign, and lord of the gallows. He had two ravens,† to whom he had taught the speech of man; and they flew far and wide through the land, and brought him the news. From all such things he became pre-eminently wise. He taught all these arts in Runes, and songs which are called incantations, and therefore the Asas are called incantation-smiths. Odin understood also the art in which the greatest power is lodged, and which he himself practised; namely, what is called magic. By means of this he could know beforehand the predestined fate‡ of men, or their not yet completed lot; and also bring on the death, ill luck, or bad health of people, and take the strength or wit from one person and give it to another. But after such witchcraft followed such weakness, that it was not thought respectable for men to practise it; and therefore the priestesses were brought up in this art. Odin also knew where all missing things were concealed under the earth, and understood the songs by which the earth, the hills, the stones, and mounds were opened to him; and he bound those who dwell in them by the power of his word, and went in and

\* This possibly refers to boats covered with skin or leather—the coracle of the Welsh and Irish.—L.

† Hugin and Munin.

‡ Örlög—the original law, the primæval law fixed from the beginning. It is curious that this idea of a predestination existed in the religion of Odin.—L.

took what he pleased. From these arts he became very celebrated. His enemies dreaded him; his friends put their trust in him, and relied on his power and on himself. He taught the most of his arts to his priests of the sacrifices, and they came nearest to himself in all wisdom and witch-knowledge. Many others, however, learned much thereof, and from that time witchcraft spread far and wide, and continued long. People sacrificed to Odin, and the twelve chiefs from Asaland,—called them their gods, and believed in them long after. From Odin's name came the name Audun, which people gave to his sons; and from Thor's name comes Thorer, also Thorarin; and also it is sometimes augmented by other additions, as Steinthor, or Hafthor, and many kinds of alterations.

#### CHAPTER VIII.—*Of Odin's Lawgiving.*

Odin established the same law in his land that had been in force among the Asas. Thus he established by law that all dead men should be burned, and their property laid with them upon the pile, and the ashes be cast into the sea or buried in the earth. Thus, said he, every one would come to Valhal with the riches he had with him upon the pile; and he would also enjoy whatever he himself had buried in the earth. For men of consequence a mound should be raised to their memory, and for all other warriors who had been distinguished for manhood a standing stone; which custom remained long after Odin's time. To-

wards winter there should be blood-sacrifice for a good year, and in the middle of winter for a good crop; and the third sacrifice should be in summer, for victory in battle.\* Over all Svithiod† the people paid Odin a tax—so much on each head; but he had to defend the country from enemy or disturbance, and pay the expense of the sacrifice feasts for a good year.

#### CHAPTER IX.—*Of Niord's Marriage.*

Niord took a wife called Skade;‡ but she would not live with him, but married afterwards Odin, and had many sons by him, of whom one was called Saming; and of this Eyvind Skaldaspiller sings thus:—

“ To Asa's son Queen Skade bore  
Saming, who dyed his shield in gore,—  
The giant-queen of rock and snow,  
Who loves to dwell on earth below,  
The iron pine-tree's daughter, she  
Sprung from the rocks that rib the sea,  
To Odin bore full many a son,  
Heroes of many a battle won.”

To Saming Earl Hakon the Great reckoned up his pedigree. This Svithiod they called Manheim, but the Great Svithiod they called Godheim; and of Godheim great wonders and novelties were related.

\* Towards winter (October 14) for the coming year, in the middle of winter (January 12), for the growing crops, and in summer (April 14), for the warlike expeditions to be undertaken. The old Norsemen knew only two seasons: winter (October 14, April 14), and summer.

† Svithiod is the present Sweden or Svealand.

‡ Skade was the daughter of the giant Thjasse. See Younger Edda.

CHAPTER X.—*Of Odin's Death.*

Odin died in his bed in Sweden; and when he was near his death he made himself be marked with the point of a spear,\* and said he was going to Godheim, and would give a welcome there to all his friends, and all brave warriors should be dedicated to him; and the Swedes believed that he was gone to the ancient Asgard, and would live there eternally. Then began anew the belief in Odin, and the calling upon him. The Swedes believed that he often showed himself to them before any great battle.† To some he gave victory; others he invited to himself; and they reckoned both of these to be well off in their fate. Odin was burnt, and at his pile there was great splendour. It was their faith, that the higher the smoke arose in the air, the higher he would be raised whose pile it was; and the richer he would be, the more property that was consumed with him.

CHAPTER XI.—*Of Niord.*

Niord of Noatun was then the sole sovereign of the Swedes; and he continued the sacrifices, and was called the drot or sovereign by the Swedes, and

\* The meaning seems to be, that he was marked with the sign of the head of a spear; that is, with the sign of the cross. The sign of Thor's hammer, viz., the head of a battle-axe or halberd, was said to be used as the sign of the cross was after Christianity was introduced: it was a kind of consecration by a holy sign. But this is probably a pious interpolation.—L.

† Thus Odin appeared before the battle near Lena, in 1208, see Fornmanna Sögur ix. 175.



he received scat and gifts from them. In his days were peace and plenty, and such good years, in all respects, that the Swedes believed Niord ruled over the growth of seasons and the prosperity of the people. In his time all the diar or gods died, and blood-sacrifices were made for them. Niord died on the bed of sickness, and before he died made himself be marked for Odin with the spear-point. The Swedes burned him, and all wept much over his grave-mound.

#### CHAPTER XII.—*Frey's Death.*

Frey took the kingdom after Niord, and was called drot by the Swedes, and they paid taxes to him. He was, like his father, fortunate in friends and in good seasons. Frey built a great temple at Upsala,\* made it his chief seat, and gave it all his taxes, his land, and goods. Then began the Upsala domains,† which have remained ever since. Then began, in his days, the Frode-peace; and then there were good seasons in all the land, which the Swedes ascribed to Frey; so that he was more worshipped than the other gods, as the people became much richer in his days by reason of the peace and good seasons. His wife was called Gerd, daughter of Gymer, and their son was called Fiolner. Frey was called

\* Upsala (properly Uppsala) is in fact genitive plural of Uppsalir, but the old preposition *till* governed genitive, and in course of time the place got the nominative form Upsala, as it is now called.

† The Upsala domains were certain estates for the support of the sovereign, and of the temple and rites of worship; which after the introduction of Christianity remained with the crown, and constituted a large portion of the crown property in Sweden.—L.

by another name, Yngve; and this name Yngve was considered long after in his race as a name of honour, so that his descendants have since been called Ynglings. Frey fell into a sickness; and as his illness took the upper hand, his men took the plan of letting few approach him. In the meantime they raised a great mound, in which they placed a door with three holes in it. Now when Frey died they bore him secretly into the mound, but told the Swedes he was alive; and they kept watch over him for three years. They brought all the taxes into the mound, and through the one hole they put in the gold, through the other the silver, and through the third the copper money that was paid. Peace and good seasons continued.

#### CHAPTER XIII.—*Of Freyja and her Daughters.*

Freyja alone remained of the gods, and she became on this account so celebrated that all women of distinction were called by her name, whence they now have the title Frue; so that every woman is called frue, or mistress over her property, and the wife is called the house-frue. Freyja continued the blood-sacrifices. Freyja was rather fickle-minded. Her husband was called Od, and her daughters Hnos and Gerseme. They were so very beautiful, that afterwards the most precious jewels were called by their names.

When it became known to the Swedes that Frey was dead, and yet peace and good seasons continued,

they believed that it must be so as long as Frey remained in Sweden; and therefore they would not burn his remains, but called him the god of this world, and afterwards offered continually blood-sacrifices to him, principally for peace and good seasons.

#### CHAPTER XIV.—*Of King Fiolner's Death.*

Fiolner, Yngve Frey's son, ruled thereafter over the Swedes and the Upsala domains. He was powerful, and lucky in seasons and in holding the peace. Fredfrode ruled then in Leire, and between them there was great friendship and visiting. Once when Fiolner went to Frode in Seeland, a great feast\* was prepared for him, and invitations to it were sent all over the country. Frode had a large house, in which there was a great vessel many ells high, and put together of great pieces of timber; and this vessel stood in a lower room. Above it was a loft, in the floor of which was an opening through which liquor was poured into this vessel. The vessel was full of mead, which was excessively strong. In the evening Fiolner, with his attendants, was taken into the adjoining loft to sleep. In the night he went out on the balcony outside to seek the privy of the house, and he was very sleepy, and

\* The old Norse word is *veizla*, a grant, gift, or allowance. It may mean simply a feast or banquet, but in Snorre's Sagas of the Kings it usually refers to the receptions or entertainments to be given, according to law, to the Norse kings or to the king's landed men or his stewards; for, as will appear in the *Heimskringla*, the king in olden times used to go on regular circuits through his kingdom, taking each county in turn; his retinue, the places of entertainment, and the time of his staying at each place, being regulated by law. See Vigfusson, Dict., s.v.

exceedingly drunk. As he came back to his room he went along the balcony to the door of another loft, went into it, and his foot slipping he fell into the vessel of mead, and was drowned. So says Thiodolf of Hvin :—

“ In Frode’s hall the fearful word,  
The death-foreboding sound was heard :  
The cry of fey \* denouncing doom,  
Was heard at night in Frode’s home.  
And when brave Frode came, he found  
Svithiod’s dark chief, Fiolner, drowned.  
In Frode’s mansion drowned was he,  
Drowned in a waveless, windless sea.”

#### CHAPTER XV.—*Of Svegder.*

Svegder took the kingdom after his father, and he made a solemn vow to seek Godheim and Odin the old. He went with twelve men through the world, and came to Tyrkland, and the Great Svithiod, where he found many of his connections. He was five years on this journey; and when he returned home to Svithiod he remained there for some time. He had got a wife in Vanheim, who was called Vana, and their son was Vanland. Svedger went out afterwards to seek again for Godheim, and came to a mansion on the east side of Svithiod† called

\* Fey, feig, (Icelandic, *feigr*, doomed to die), is used in the same sense in the northern languages as in Scotland, denoting the acts or words or sounds preceding, and supposed to be portending, a sudden death. “The gauger is fey,” in Sir Walter Scott’s novel “Guy Mannering,” is an expression seized by that great painter of Scottish life from the common people, and applied in its true meaning.—L.

† It is not clear whether the Greater or Minor Svithiod is here meant. In Upland in Sweden are found gards by this name, but there is also a place called Stein, in Estland.

Stein, where there was a stone as big as a large house. In the evening after sunset, as Svegger was going from the drinking-table to his sleeping-room, he cast his eye upon the stone, and saw that a dwarf was sitting under it. Svegger and his man were very drunk, and they ran towards the stone. The dwarf stood in the door, and called to Svegger, and told him to come in, and he should see Odin. Svegger ran into the stone, which instantly closed behind him, and Svegger never came back. Thiodolf of Hvin tells of this :—

“ By Durner’s\* elfin race,  
 Who haunt the cliffs and shun day’s face,  
 The valiant Svegger was deceived,  
 The elfs false words the king believed.  
 The dauntless hero rushing on,  
 Passed through the yawning mouth of stone :  
 It yawned—it shut—the hero fell,  
 In Sokmimer’s† hall, where giants dwell.”

#### CHAPTER XVI.—*Of Vanlande, Svegger’s Son.*

Vanlande, Svegger’s son, succeeded his father, and ruled over the Upsala domain. He was a great warrior, and went far around in different lands. Once he took up his winter abode in Finland with Snow the Old, and got his daughter Drifa in marriage ; but in spring he set out leaving Drifa behind, and although he had promised to return within three years he did not come back for ten. Then Drifa

\* Durnr, the second chief of the dwarfs or elves, in the Scandinavian mythology.—L.

† Sokmimer—the giant of the deep, the destructive maelstrom of the ocean.—L.

sent a message to the witch Huld; and sent Visbur, her son by Vanlande, to Sweden. Drifa bribed the witch-wife Huld, either that she should bewitch Vanlande to return to Finland, or kill him. When this witch-work was going on Vanlande was at Upsala, and a great desire came over him to go to Finland; but his friends and counsellors advised him against it, and said the witchcraft of the Fin people showed itself in this desire of his to go there. He then became very drowsy, and laid himself down to sleep; but when he had slept but a little while, he cried out, saying, "Mara \* was treading upon him." His men hastened to him to help him; but when they took hold of his head she trod on his legs, so that they nearly broke, and when they laid hold of his legs she pressed upon his head; and it was his death. The Swedes took his body and burnt it at a river called Skut, where a standing stone was raised over him. Thus says Thiodolf:—

" And Vanlande, in a fatal hour,  
Was dragg'd by Grimhild's daughter's power,  
The witch-wife's, to the dwelling-place  
Where men meet Odin face to face.  
Trampled to death, to old Skut's shore  
The corpse his faithful followers bore;  
And there they burnt, with heavy hearts,  
The good chief killed by witchcraft's arts."

#### CHAPTER XVII.—*Of Visbur's Death.*

Visbur inherited after his father Vanlande. He married the daughter of Aude the Rich, and gave

\* Mara, the nightmare. We retain the name, and the notion that it is a demon riding or treading on the sleeper.—L.

her as her bride-gift three large farms, and a gold ornament. They had two sons, Gisl and Ondur; but Visbur left her and took another wife, whereupon she went home to her father with her two sons. Visbur had a son who was called Domalde, and his stepmother used witchcraft to give him ill-luck. Now, when Visbur's sons were, the one twelve, the other thirteen years of age, they went to their father's place, and desired to have their mother's dower; but he would not deliver it to them. Then they said that the gold ornament should be the death of the best man in all his race; and they returned home. Then they began again with enchantments and witchcraft, to try if they could destroy their father. The volva\* Huld said that by witchcraft she would bring about not only this, but also that a murderer of his own kin should never be wanting in the Yngling race; and they agreed to have it so. Thereafter they collected men, came unexpectedly in the night on Visbur, and burned him in his house. So sang Thiodolf:—

“ Have the fire-dogs' fierce tongues yelling  
Lapt Visbur's blood on his own hearth?  
Have the flames consumed the dwelling  
Of the hero's soul on earth?  
Madly ye acted, who set free  
The forest foe, red fire, night thief,  
Fell brother of the raging sea,†  
Against your father and your chief.”

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\* The volva, sometimes erroneously written vola, is a word of uncertain etymology meaning a prophetess, sibyl, wise woman. Volva, seid-kona, and spakona are synonymous. They are all skilled in sorcery.

† Forniot was father of Loge, Hler, and Kare; or Fire, the Sea, and the Wind; and hence fire is called by the skalds the brother of the sea.

CHAPTER XVIII.—*Of Domalde's Death.*

Domalde took the heritage after his father Visbur, and ruled over the land. As in his time there was great famine and distress in Svithiod, the Swedes made great offerings of sacrifice at Upsala. The first autumn they sacrificed oxen, but the succeeding season was not improved by it. The following autumn they sacrificed men, but the succeeding year was rather worse. The third autumn, when the offer of sacrifices should begin, a great multitude of Swedes came to Upsala; and now the chiefs held consultations with each other, and all agreed that the times of scarcity were on account of their king Domalde, and they resolved to offer him for good seasons, and to assault and kill him, and sprinkle the altar of the gods with his blood. And they did so. Thiodolf tells of this:—

“ It has happened oft ere now,  
That foeman's weapon has laid low  
The crowned head, where battle plain  
Was miry red with the blood-rain.  
But Domalde dies by bloody arms,  
Raised not by foes in war's alarms,—  
Raised by his Swedish liegeman's hand,  
To bring good seasons to the land.”

CHAPTER XIX.—*Of Domar's Death.*

Domalde's son, called Domar, next ruled over the land. He reigned long, and in his days were good

*Loge* is a word still retained in the northern parts of Scotland to signify fire. The *lowe*, for the blaze or flame of fire, is indeed in general use in Scotland.—L.



seasons and peace. Nothing is told of him but that he died in his bed in Upsala, and was transported to the Fyrisvols,\* where his body was burned on the river-bank, and where his standing stone still remains. So says Thiodolf:—

“ I have asked wise men to tell  
Where Domar rests, and they knew well.  
Domar, on Fyri's wide-spread ground,  
Was burned, and laid on Yngve's mound.”

#### CHAPTER XX.—*Of Dygve's Death.*

Dygve was the name of his son, who succeeded him in ruling the land; and about him nothing is said but that he died in his bed. Thiodolf tells of it thus:—

“ Dygve the Brave, the mighty king,  
It is no hidden secret thing,  
Has gone to meet a royal mate,  
Riding upon the horse of Fate.  
For Loke's daughter † in her house  
Of Yngve's race would have a spouse;  
Therefore the fell-one snatched away  
Brave Dygve from the light of day.”

Dygve's mother was Drot, a daughter of King Danp, the son of Rig, who was first called king in the Danish tongue.‡ His descendants always afterwards considered the title of king the title of highest dignity. Dygve was the first of his family called

\* The plains near Upsala, now called by the Swedes Fyrisvall.

† Loke's (the evil principle) daughter was Hel, who received in the under world those who, not having fallen in battle, were not received by Odin in Valhal. Our word “hell” is connected with the name of this goddess apparently.—L.

‡ That is, throughout the North.

king, for his predecessors had been called *Drottmar*, and their wives *Dróttningar*, and their court *Drott*.\* Each of their race was called Yngve, or Yngune, and the whole race together Ynglings.† The queen Drot was a sister of King Dan Mikillate, from whom Denmark took its name.

### CHAPTER XXI.—*Of Dag the Wise.*

King Dygve's son, called Dag, succeeded to him, and was so wise a man that he understood the language of birds. He had a sparrow which told him much news, and flew to different countries. Once the sparrow flew to Reidgotaland,‡ to a farm called Volve, where he flew into the peasant's corn-field and took his grain. The peasant came up, took a stone, and killed the sparrow. King Dag was ill pleased that the sparrow did not come home; and

\* See further on this point in *Rígsmaal* in the *Elder Edda*.

† Is it possible that the *Ingævones* of *Tacitus* can have any relation to this of tribe Yngune or Yngve? The passage, cap. 2, "*De Moribus Germaniæ*," has a remarkable coincidence with the saga story of these Northmen. "*Celebrant carminibus antiquis (quod unum apud illos memoriæ et annalium genus est) Tuisconem Deum, terra editum, et filium Mannum, originem gentis conditoresque. Manno tres filios e quorum nominibus proximi oceano Ingævones.*" Here is a tribe of Ingæve deriving their origin from the gods, like the Yngve or Yngune of the saga.—L.

‡ Reidgotaland is understood to mean Jutland,<sup>1</sup> and Eygotaland the islands inhabited by the same people. It is by no means clear that the so called Gotlanders on the Baltic coast have any connection with the great population called the Goths, unless a fortuitous similarity of name and a common origin. That the vast hordes called Goths who overwhelmed Italy came from these Gotlands, it is inconsistent with common sense to suppose. The whole coasts of the Baltic could furnish no such masses of armed men now even, when they furnish more subsistence for man.—L.

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<sup>1</sup> Reidgotaland is supposed by some authorities to mean the island Gotland. The *reid* means waggon or chariot.

as he, in a sacrifice of expiation, inquired after the sparrow, he got the answer that it was killed at Vorve. Thereupon he ordered a great army, and went to Gotland; and when he came to Vorve he landed with his men and plundered, and the people fled away before him. King Dag returned in the evening to his ships, after having killed many people and taken many prisoners. As they were going across a river at a place called Skiotan's Ford, or Weapon Ford, a labouring thrall came running to the river-side, and threw a hay-fork into their troop. It struck the king on the head, so that he fell instantly from his horse and died, and his men went back to Svithiod. In those times the chief who ravaged a country was called Gram,\* and the men-at-arms under him Grams. Thiodolf sings of it thus:—

“ What news is this that the king's men,  
Flying eastward through the glen,  
Report? That Dag the Brave, whose name  
Is sounded far and wide by Fame,—  
That Dag, who knew so well to wield  
The battle-axe in bloody field,  
Where brave men meet, no more will head  
The brave—that mighty Dag is dead !

“ Vorve was wasted with the sword,  
And vengeance taken for the bird,—  
The little bird that used to bring  
News to the ear of the great king.  
Vorve was ravaged, and the strife  
Was ended when the monarch's life  
Was ended too—the great Dag fell  
By the hay-fork of a base thrall ! ”

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\* Gram is equivalent to grim, fierce.—L.

CHAPTER XXII.—*Of Agne.*

Agne was the name of Dag's son, who was king after him,—a powerful and celebrated man, expert, and exercised in all feats. It happened one summer that King Agne went with his army to Finland, and landed and marauded. The Fins gathered a large army, and proceeded to the strife under a chief called Froste. There was a great battle, in which King Agne gained the victory, and Froste fell there with a great many of his people. King Agne proceeded with armed hand through Finland, subdued it, and made enormous booty. He took Froste's daughter Skialf, and her brother Loge, and carried them along with him. When he sailed from the east he came to land at Stoksund,\* and put up his tent to the south on the ness, where then there was a wood. King Agne had at the time the gold ornament which had belonged to Visbur. He now married Skialf, and she begged him to make a burial feast in honour of her father. He invited a great many distinguished guests, and made a great feast. He had become very celebrated by his expedition, and there was a great drinking match. Now when King Agne had got drunk, Skialf bade him take care of his gold ornament which he had about his neck; therefore he took hold of the ornament, and bound it fast about his neck before he went to sleep. The land-tent stood at the wood side, and a high

\* Stoksund is the sound or stream at Stockholm, between the Mælär lake and the sea.

tree over the tent protected it against the heat of the sun. Now when King Agne was asleep, Skialf took a noose, and fastened it under the ornament. Thereupon her men threw down the tent-poles, cast the loop of the noose up in the branches of the tree, and hauled upon it, so that the king was hanged close under the branches and died; and Skialf with her men ran down to their ships, and rowed away. King Agne was cremated upon the spot, which was afterwards called Agnafit;\* and it lies on the east side of the Taurin, and west of Stoksund. Thiodolf speaks of it thus:—

“ How do ye like the high-souled maid,  
 Who, with the grim Fate-goddess' aid,  
 Avenged her sire?—made Svithiod's king  
 Through air in golden halter swing?  
 How do ye like her, Agne's men?  
 Think ye that any chief again  
 Will court the fate your chief befell,  
 To ride on wooden horse to hell?”

#### CHAPTER XXIII.—*Of Alrek and Eirik.*

The sons of Agne were called Alrek and Eirik, and were kings together after him. They were powerful men, great warriors, and expert at all feats of arms. It was their custom to ride and break in horses both to walk and to gallop, which nobody understood so well as they; and they vied with each other who could ride best, and keep the best horses. It happened one day that both the brothers rode out to-

\* Icelandic, *fit*, genitive *fitjar*, means literally the webbed foot of water-birds, but metaphorically meadow-land on the banks of a firth, lake, or river, and is here used in the latter sense.

gether alone, and at a distance from their followers, with their best horses, and rode on to a field; but never came back. The people at last came out to look after them, and they were both found dead with their heads crushed. As they had no weapons, except it might be their horses' bridles, people believed that they had killed each other with them. So says Thiodolf:—

“ Alrek fell, by Eirik slain,  
Eirik's life-blood dyed the plain.  
Brother fell by brother's hand;  
And they tell it in the land,  
That they worked the wicked deed  
With the sharp bits that guide the steed.  
Shall it be said of Frey's brave sons,  
The kingly race, the noble ones,  
That they have fought in deadly battle  
With the head-gear of their cattle? ”

#### CHAPTER XXIV.—*Of Yngve and Alf.*

Alrek's sons, Yngve and Alf, then succeeded to the kingly power in Svithiod. Yngve was a great warrior, always victorious; handsome, expert in all exercises, strong and very sharp in battle, generous and full of mirth; so that he was both renowned and beloved. Alf his brother was a silent, harsh, unfriendly man, and sat at home in the land, and never went out on war expeditions. They called him Elfse. His mother was called Dageid, a daughter of King Dag the Great, from whom the family of Daglings are descended. King Alf had a wife named Bera,\* who was the most agreeable of women, very

\* A female bear.

brisk and gay. One autumn Yngve, Alrek's son, had arrived at Upsala from a viking cruise by which he was become very celebrated. He often sat long in the evening at the drinking table; but Alf went willingly to bed very early. Queen Bera sat often till late in the evening, and she and Yngve conversed together for their amusement; but Alf often told her that she should not sit up so late in the evening, but should go first to bed, so as not to waken him. She replied, that happy would be the woman who had Yngve instead of Alf for her husband; and as she often repeated the same, he became very angry. One evening Alf went into the hall, where Yngve and Bera sat on the high-seat speaking to each other. Yngve had a short sword upon his knees, and the guests were so drunk that they did not observe the king's coming in. King Alf went straight to the high-seat, drew a sword from under his cloak, and pierced his brother Yngve through and through. Yngve leaped up, drew his short sword, and gave Alf his death-wound; so that both fell dead on the floor. Alf and Yngve were buried under mounds in Fyrisvols. Thus tells Thiodolf of it:—

“ I tell you of a horrid thing,  
A deed of dreadful note I sing,—  
How by false Bera, wicked queen,  
The murderous brother-hands were seen  
Each raised against a brother's life;  
How wretched Alf with bloody knife  
Gored Yngve's heart, and Yngve's blade  
Alf on the bloody threshold laid.  
Can men resist Fate's iron laws?  
They slew each other without cause.”

CHAPTER XXV.—*Of Huggleik.*

Huggleik was the name of King Alf's son, who succeeded the two brothers in the kingdom of the Swedes, the sons of Yngve being still children. King Huggleik was no warrior, but sat quietly at home in his country. He was very rich, but had still more the reputation of being very greedy. He had at his court all sorts of players, who played on harps, fiddles, and viols; and had with him magicians, and all sorts of witches. Hake and Hagbard were two brothers, very celebrated as sea-kings, who had a great force of men-at-arms. Sometimes they cruised in company, sometimes each for himself, and many warriors followed them both. King Hake came with his troops to Svithiod against King Huggleik, who, on his side, collected a great army to oppose him. Two brothers came to his assistance, Svipdag and Geigad, both very celebrated men, and powerful combatants. King Hake had about him twelve champions, and among them Starkad the Old;\* and King Hake himself was a murderous combatant. They met on Fyrisvols, and there was a great battle, in which King Huggleik's army was soon defeated. Then the combatants, Svipdag and Geigad, pressed forward manfully; but Hake's champions went six against one, and they were both taken prisoners. Then King Hake penetrated within the shield-circle †

\* Full accounts of Starkad and of Hagbard can be found in Saxo Grammaticus.

† A bulwark or covering of shields—the testudo of the Romans—seems always to have been formed round the king's person in battle.—L.



around King Huggleik, and killed him and two of his sons within it. After this the Swedes fled; and King Hake subdued the country, and became king of Svithiod. He then sat quietly at home for three years; but during that time his combatants went abroad on viking expeditions, and gathered property for themselves.

#### CHAPTER XXVI.—*King Gudlaug's Death.*

Jorund and Eirik, the sons of Yngve Alrekson, lay all this time in their war-ships, and were great warriors. One summer they marauded in Denmark, where they met a King Gudlaug, king of the HALEYGIANs, and had a battle with him, which ended in their clearing Gudlaug's ship and taking him prisoner. They carried him to the land at STRAUMEYNES, and hanged him there, and afterwards his men raised a mound over him. So says Eyvind Skaldaspiller:—

“By the fierce East-kings’ \* cruel pride,  
Gudlaug must on the wild horse ride—  
The wildest horse you e’er did see :  
’Tis SIGAR’s steed—the gallows tree.  
At STRAUMEYNES the tree did grow,  
Where Gudlaug’s corpse waves on the bough.  
A high stone stands on STRAUMEY’S heath,  
To tell the gallant hero’s death.”

#### CHAPTER XXVII.—*Of King Hake.*

The brothers Eirik and Jorund became much celebrated by this deed, and appeared to be much

\* The Swedish kings Jorund and Eirik, of Yngve’s race, are said to be of the East—as relative to Norway, from which Gudlaug came.—L.

greater men than before. When they heard that King Hake in Svithiod had sent from him his champions, they steered towards Svithiod, and gathered together a strong force. As soon as the Swedes heard that the Ynglings were come to them, they flocked to the brothers in multitudes. The brothers proceeded up the Lag (Mælar) lake, and advanced towards Upsala against King Hake, who came out against them on the Fyrisvols with far fewer people. There was a great battle, in which King Hake went forward so bravely that he killed all who were nearest to him, and at last killed King Eirik, and cut down the banner of the two brothers. King Jorund with all his men fled to their ships. King Hake had been so grievously wounded that he saw his days could not be long; so he ordered a war-ship which he had to be loaded with his dead men and their weapons, and to be taken out to the sea; the tiller to be shipped, and the sails hoisted. Then he set fire to some tar-wood, and ordered a pile to be made over it in the ship. Hake was almost if not quite dead, when he was laid upon this pile of his. The wind was blowing off the land,—the ship flew, burning in clear flame, out between the islets, into the ocean. Great was the fame of this deed in after times.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.—*Jorund's Death.*

Jorund, King Yngve's son, remained king at Upsala. He ruled the country; but was often, in

summer, out on war expeditions. One summer he went with his forces to Denmark; and having plundered all around in Jutland, he went into Limfiord in autumn, and marauded there also. While he was thus lying in Oddasund with his people, King Gylaug of Halogaland, a son of King Gudlaug, of whom mention is made before, came up with a great force, and gave battle to Jorund. When the country people saw this they swarmed from all parts towards the battle, in great ships and small; and Jorund was overpowered by the multitude, and his ships cleared of their men. He sprang overboard, but was made prisoner and carried to the land. Gylaug ordered a gallows to be erected, led Jorund to it, and had him hanged there. So ended his life. Thiodolf talks of this event thus:—

“ Jorund has travelled far and wide,  
 But the same horse he must bestride  
 On which he made brave Gudlaug ride.  
 He too must for a necklace wear  
 Hagbard's \* fell noose in middle air.  
 The army leader thus must ride  
 On Odin's † horse, at Limfiord's side.”

#### CHAPTER XXIX.—*Of King Ane's Death.*

Aun or Ane was the name of Jorund's son, who became king of the Swedes after his father. He was a wise man, who made great sacrifices to the gods; but, being no warrior, he lived quietly at

\* Hagbard's noose—the gallows rope by which Hagbard was hanged.—L.

† Odin was the god of the hanged; and Odin's horse was a name for the gallows. The gallows are (as on p. 298) called the horse of Sigar, from the love tale of the hero by that name.

home. In the time when the kings we have been speaking of were in Upsala, Denmark had been ruled over by Dan Mikellate, who lived to a very great age; then by his son, Frode Mikellate, or the Peace-loving, who was succeeded by his sons Halfdan and Fridleif, who were great warriors. Halfdan was older than his brother, and above him in all things. He went with his army against King Aun to Svithiod, and was always victorious. At last King Aun fled to West Gautland when he had been king in Upsala about twenty-five years, and was in Gautland twenty-five years, while Halfdan remained king in Upsala. King Halfdan died in his bed, and was buried there in a mound; and King Aun returned to Upsala when he was sixty years of age. He made a great sacrifice, and in it offered up his son to Odin. Aun got an answer from Odin, that he should live sixty years longer; and he was afterwards king in Upsala for twenty-five years. Now came Ale the Bold, a son of King Fridleif, with his army to Svithiod against King Aun, and they had several battles with each other; but Ale was always the victor. Then Aun fled a second time to West Gautland; and for twenty-five years Ale reigned in Upsala, until he was killed by Starkad the Old. After Ale's fall, Aun returned to Upsala and ruled the kingdom for twenty-five years. Then he made a great sacrifice again for long life, in which he sacrificed his second son, and received the answer from Odin, that he should live as long as he gave him one of his sons every tenth year, and also that

he should name one of the districts of his country after the number of sons he should offer to Odin. When he had sacrificed the seventh of his sons he continued to live for ten years; but so that he could not walk, but was carried on a chair. Then he sacrificed his eighth son, and lived thereafter ten years, lying in his bed. Now he sacrificed his ninth son, and lived ten years more; but so that he drank out of a horn like an infant. He had now only one son remaining, whom he also wanted to sacrifice, and to give Odin Upsala and the domains thereunto belonging, under the name of the Tenth Land, but the Swedes would not allow it; so there was no sacrifice, and King Aun died, and was buried in a mound at Upsala. Since that time it is called Aun's sickness when a man dies, without pain, of extreme old age. Thiodolf tells of this.—

“ In Upsala town the cruel king  
Slaughtered his sons at Odin's shrine—  
Slaughtered his sons with cruel knife,  
To get from Odin length of life.  
He lived until he had to turn  
His toothless mouth to the deer's horn ;  
And he who shed his children's blood  
Sucked through the ox's horn his food.  
At length fell Death has tracked him down,  
Slowly, but sure, in Upsala town.”

#### CHAPTER XXX.—*Of Egil and Tunne.*

Egil was the name of Aun the Old's son, who succeeded as king in Svithiod after his father's death. He was no warrior, but sat quietly at home. Tunne was the name of a slave who had been the

counsellor and treasurer of Aun the Old ; and when Aun died Tunne took much treasure and buried it in the earth. Now when Egil became king he put Tunne among the other slaves, which he took very ill, and ran away with others of the slaves. They dug up the treasures which Tunne had concealed, and he gave them to his men, and was made their chief. Afterwards many malefactors flocked to him ; and they lay out in the woods, but sometimes fell upon the domains, pillaging and killing the people. When King Egil heard this, he went out with his forces to pursue them ; but one night when he had taken up his night quarters, Tunne came there with his men, fell on the king's men unexpectedly, and killed many of them. As soon as King Egil perceived the tumult, he prepared for defence, and set up his banner ; but many people deserted him, because Tunne and his men attacked them so boldly, and King Egil saw that nothing was left but to fly. Tunne pursued the fugitives into the forest, and then returned to the inhabited land, ravaging and plundering without resistance. All the goods that fell into Tunne's hands he gave to his people, and thus became popular and strong in men. King Egil assembled an army again, and hastened to give battle to Tunne. But Tunne was again victorious, and King Egil fled with the loss of many people. Egil and Tunne had eight battles with each other, and Tunne always gained the victory. Then King Egil fled out of the country, and went to Seeland in Denmark, to Frode

the Bold, and promised him a scat from the Swedes to obtain help. Frode gave him an army, and also his champions, with which force King Egil repaired to Svithiod. When Tunne heard this he came out to meet him; and there was a great battle, in which Tunne fell, and King Egil recovered his kingdom, and the Danes returned home. King Egil sent King Frode great and good presents every year, but he paid no scat to the Danes; but notwithstanding the friendship between Egil and Frode continued without interruption. After Tunne's fall, Egil ruled the kingdom for three years. It happened in Svithiod that an old bull, which was destined for sacrifice, was fed so high that he became dangerous to people; and when they were going to lay hold of him he escaped into the woods, became furious, and was long in the forest committing great damage to the people. King Egil was a great hunter, and often rode into the forest to chase wild animals. Once he rode out with his men to hunt in the forest. The king had traced an animal a long while, and followed it in the forest, separated from all his men. He observed at last that it was the bull, and rode up to it to kill it. The bull turned round suddenly, and the king struck him with his spear; but it tore itself out of the wound. The bull now struck his horn in the side of the horse, so that he instantly fell flat on the earth with the king. The king sprang up, and was drawing his sword, when the bull struck his horns right into the king's breast. The king's men then came up and killed

the bull. The king lived but a short time, and was buried in a mound at Upsala. Thiodolf sings of it thus :—

“ The fair-haired son of Odin’s race,  
 Who fled before fierce Tunne’s face,  
 Has perished by the demon-beast  
 Who roams the forest of the East.  
 The hero’s breast met the full brunt  
 Of the wild bull’s shaggy front ;  
 The hero’s heart’s asunder torn  
 By the fell Jotun’s spear-like horn.”

#### CHAPTER XXXI.—*Of King Ottar.*

Ottar\* was the name of King Egil’s son who succeeded to the domains and kingdom after him. He did not continue friendly with King Frode, and therefore King Frode sent messengers to King Ottar to demand the scat which Egil had promised him. Ottar replied, that the Swedes had never paid scat to the Danes, neither would he ; and the messengers had to depart with this answer. Frode was a great warrior ; and he came one summer with his army to Svithiod, and landed and ravaged the country. He killed many people, took some prisoners, burned all around in the inhabited parts, made a great booty, and made great devastation. The next summer King Frode made an expedition to the eastward ;† and when King Ottar heard that Frode was

\* The Beowulf poem names among the Shilfings the old Ongenþew and his sons Onela and Ohthere (Ottar). Ohthere’s sons, one of whom was named Eadgils, and the other Eámmund, came into conflict with the ruling king, a son of Ongenþeow (Angantyr?) and had to take flight from him to the Gauts.

† Icelandic, *i Austrveg* ; that is, to the east side of the Baltic.



not at home in his own country, he went on board his own ships, sailed over to Denmark, and ravaged there without opposition. As he heard that a great many people were collected at Seeland, he proceeds westward to the Sound, and sails north about to Jutland; lands at Limfiord; plunders the Vendel district;\* burns, and lays waste, and makes desolate the country he goes over with his army. Vot and Faste were the names of the earls whom Frode had appointed to defend the country in Denmark while he was abroad. When the earls heard that the Swedish king was laying waste Denmark, they collected an army, hastened on board their ships, and sailed by the south side to Limfiord. They came unexpectedly upon Ottar, and the battle began immediately. The Swedes gave them a good reception, and many people fell on both sides; but as soon as men fell in the Danish army other men hastened from the country to fill their places, and also all the vessels in the neighbourhood joined them. The battle ended with the fall of Ottar and the greater part of his people. The Danes took his body, carried it to the land, laid it upon a mound of earth, and let the wild beasts and ravens tear it into pieces. Thereafter they made a figure of a crow out of wood, sent it to Sweden, and sent word with it that their king, Ottar, was no better than it; and from this he was called Ottar Vendelcrow. Thiodolf tells so of it:—

“ By Danish arms the hero bold, '  
Ottar the Brave, lies stiff and cold.

---

\* Vendel, the part of Jutland north of Limfiord, now called Vendsyssel.

To Vendel's plain the corpse was borne ;  
By eagles' claws the corpse is torn,  
Spattered by ravens' bloody feet,  
The wild bird's prey, the wild wolf's meat.  
The Swedes have vowed revenge to take  
On Frode's earls, for Ottar's sake ;  
Like dogs to kill them in their land,  
In their own homes, by Swedish hand."

CHAPTER XXXII.—*Of King Adils' Marriage.*

Adils was the name of King Ottar's son and successor. He was a long time king, became very rich, and went also for several summers on viking expeditions. On one of these he came to Saxonland with his troops. There a king was reigning called Geirthiof, and his wife was called Aloh the Great ; but nothing is told of their children. The king was not at home, and Adils and his men ran up to the king's house and plundered it, while others drove a herd of cattle down to the strand.\* The herd was attended by slave-people, carls, and girls, and they took all of them together. Among them was a remarkably beautiful girl called Yrsa. Adils returned home with this plunder. Yrsa was not one of the slave girls, and it was soon observed that she was intelligent, spoke well, and in all respects was well

\* The ordinary way, with the vikings, of victualling their ships, was driving cattle down to the strand and killing them, without regard to the property of friends or enemies ; and this was so established a practice, that it was expressed in a single word, "strandhug." King Harald Harfager had prohibited the strandhug being committed in his own dominions by his own subjects on their viking cruises ; and Rolf Ganger, the son of the Earl of More, having, notwithstanding, landed and made a strandhug in the South of Norway where the king happened to be, was outlawed ; and he in consequence set out on an expedition, in which he conquered and settled in Normandy.—L.

behaved. All people thought well of her, and particularly the king; and at last it came to so far that the king celebrated his wedding with her, and Yrsa became queen of Svithiod, and was considered an excellent woman.

CHAPTER XXXIII.—*Of King Adils' Death.*

King Halfdan's son Helge ruled at that time over Leire. He came to Svithiod with so great an army, that King Adils saw no other way than to fly at once. King Helge landed with his army, plundered, and made a great booty. He took Queen Yrsa prisoner, carried her with him to Leire, took her to wife, and had a son by her called Rolf Krake. When Rolf was three years old, Queen Alof came to Denmark, and told Queen Yrsa that her husband, King Helge, was her own father, and that she, Alof, was her mother. Thereupon Yrsa went back to Svithiod to King Adils, and was queen there as long as she lived. King Helge fell in a war expedition; and Rolf Krake, who was then eight years old, was taken to be king in Leire. King Adils had many disputes with a king called Ale of the Uplands; he was from Norway; and these kings had a battle on the ice of the Vener lake, in which King Ale fell, and King Adils won the battle. There is a long account of this battle in the *Skioldunga Saga*,\* and also about Rolf Krake's coming to Adils, and sowing gold upon the Fyrisvols. King Adils was a great lover of

\* The *Skioldunga Saga* is lost, but a reference to it is also found in *Skaldskaparmal* of the Younger Edda.

good horses, and had the best horses of these times. One of his horses was called Slongver, and another Hrafn. This horse he had taken from Ale on his death, and bred from him a horse, also called Hrafn, which the king sent as a present to King Godgest in Halogaland. When Godgest mounted the horse he was not able to manage him, and fell off, and was killed. This accident happened at Omd in Halogaland.\* King Adils was at a Disa † sacrifice; and as he rode around the Disa hall his horse Hrafn stumbled and fell, and the king was thrown forward upon his head, and his skull was split, and his brains dashed out against a stone. Adils died at Upsala, and was buried there in a mound. The Swedes called him a great king. Thiodolf speaks thus of him:—

“ Witch-demons, I have heard men say,  
Have taken Adils' life away.  
The son of kings of Frey's great race,  
First in the fray, the fight, the chase,  
Fell from his steed—his clotted brains  
Lie mixed with mire on Upsala's plains.  
Such death (grim Fate has willed it so)  
Has struck down Ale's deadly foe.”

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.—*Rolf Krake's Death.*

Eystein, King Adils' son, ruled next over Svithiod, and in his lifetime Rolf Krake of Leire fell. In those days many kings, both Danes and Northmen,

\* Halogaland is the province of Norway now called Nordland, extending from the Namsen river north to Westfiord, where it joins the province of Finmark.—L.

† The dises (Icel. *dis*, pl. *disir*) of Teutonic mythology were goddesses or female guardian angels, who followed every man from his birth, and only left him in the hour of his death.

ravished the Swedish dominions; for there were many sea-kings who ruled over many people, but had no lands, and he might well be called a sea-king who never slept beneath sooty roof-timbers, and never drank near the hearthstone.

CHAPTER XXXV.—*Of Eystein and the Jutland King Solve.*

There was a sea-king called Solve,\* a son of Hagne of Niardey,† who at that time plundered in the Baltic, but had his dominion in Jutland. He came with his forces to Svithiod, just as King Eystein was at a feast in a district called Lofund.‡ Solve came unexpectedly in the night on Eystein, surrounded the house in which the king was, and burned him and all his court. Then Solve went to Sigtuna and desired that the Swedes should receive him, and give him the title of king; but they collected an army, and tried to defend the country against him, on which there was a great battle, that lasted, according to report, eleven days. There King Solve was victorious, and was afterwards king of the Swedish dominions for a long time, until at last the Swedes betrayed him, and he was killed. Thiodolf tells of it thus:—

“For a long time none could tell  
How Eystein died—but now I know  
That at Lofund the hero fell;  
The branch of Odin was laid low,

---

\* Solve is in all later documents written *Salve*.

† Niardey, an island in North Thronhjæm district.—L.

‡ Lofund, an isle in the Mælar lake, on which the palace of Drottningholm now stands.—L.

Was burnt by Solve's Jutland men.  
 The raging tree-devourer fire  
 Rushed on the monarch in its ire ;  
 First fell the castle timbers, then  
 The roof-beams—Eystein's funeral pyre.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.—*Of Yngvar's Fall.*

Yngvar, who was King Eystein's son, then became king of Sweden. He was a great warrior, and often lay out with his war-ships ; for the Swedish dominions were much ransacked then by Danes and East-country men. King Yngvar made a peace with the Danes ; but betook himself to ravaging the East country in return. One summer he went with his forces to Esthonia, and plundered at a place called Stein. The Esthonians came down from the interior with a great army, and there was a battle ; but the army of the country was so brave that the Swedes could not withstand them, and King Yngvar fell, and his people fled. He was buried close to the sea-shore under a mound, in Adalsysla\*, and after this defeat the Swedes returned home. Thiodolf sings of it thus :—

“ Certain it is the Estland foe  
 The fair-haired Swedish king laid low.  
 On Estland's strand, o'er Swedish graves,  
 The East Sea sings her song of waves ;  
 King Yngvar's dirge is ocean's roar  
 Resounding on the rock-ribbed shore.”

CHAPTER XXXVII.—*Of Onund the Land-clearer.*

Onund was the name of Yngvar's son who succeeded him. In his days there was peace in Svithiod,

\* In Esthonia or Estland, written by Snorre *Estland*.

and he became rich in valuable goods. King Onund went with his army to Esthonia to avenge his father, and landed and ravaged the country round far and wide, and returned with a great booty in autumn to Svithiod. In his time there were fruitful seasons in Svithiod, so that he was one of the most popular of kings. Svithiod is a great forest land, and there are such great uninhabited forests in it that it is a journey of many days to cross them. Onund bestowed great diligence and expense on clearing the woods and cultivating the cleared land. He made roads through the desert forests; and thus cleared land is found all through the forest country, and great districts are settled. In this way extensive tracts of land were brought into cultivation, for there were country people enough to occupy the land. Onund had roads made through all Svithiod, both through forests and morasses, and also over mountains; and he was therefore called Onund Roadmaker. He had a house built for himself in every district of Svithiod, and went over the whole country in guest-quarters.\*

#### CHAPTER XXXVIII.—*Of Ingiald Illrade.*

Onund had a son called Ingiald, and at that time Yngvar was king of the district of Fiadrundaland.

\* This continued to be the ordinary way of subsisting the kings and court in Norway for many generations. In Sweden the kings appear to have had a fixed residence at Upsala, and in Denmark at Leire and Odense; while in Norway they appear to have lived always in royal progresses through the districts in turns, without any palace, castle, or fixed abode.—L.

It is somewhat strange to find Onund building roads in every district of Sweden, inasmuch as he ruled over only a part of it. See chapter 43.

Yngvar had two sons by his wife,—the one called Alf, the other Agnar,—who were about the same age as Ingiald. Onund's district-kings were at that time spread widely over Svithiod, and Svipdag the Blind ruled over Tiundaland, in which Upsala is situated, and where all the Swedish Things are held. There also were held the mid-winter sacrifices, at which many kings attended. One year at mid-winter there was a great assembly of people at Upsala, and King Yngvar had also come there with his sons. Alf, King Yngvar's son, and Ingiald, King Onund's son, were there,—both about six years old. They amused themselves with child's play, in which each should be leading on his army. In their play Ingiald found himself not so strong as Alf, and was so vexed that he cried bitterly. His foster-brother Gautved came up, led him to his foster-father Svipdag the Blind, and told him how ill it appeared that he was weaker and less manly than Alf, King Yngvar's son. Svipdag replied that it was a great shame. The day after Svipdag took the heart of a wolf, roasted it on the tongs, and gave it to the king's son Ingiald to eat, and from that time he became a most ferocious person, and of the worst disposition. When Ingiald was grown up, Onund applied for him to King Algaute for his daughter Gauthild. Algaute was a son of Gautrek the Mild, and grandson of Gaut; and from them Gautland \*

\* This derivation of the name Gautland, given to the small kingdoms in Sweden called East and West Gautland, from the name of a chief, does away with a great deal of absurd speculation that these small districts were the original seats of the mighty people called Goths



took its name.\* King Algaute thought his daughter would be well married if she got King Onund's son, and if he had his father's disposition; so the girl was sent to Svithiod, and King Ingiald celebrated his wedding with her in due time.

CHAPTER XXXIX.—*Of King Onund's Death.*

King Onund one autumn, travelling between his mansion-houses, came over a road called Himin-heath, where there are some narrow mountain valleys, with high mountains on both sides. There was heavy rain at the time, and before there had been snow on the mountains. A landslip of clay and stones came down upon King Onund and his people, and there he met his death, and many with him.† So says Thiodolf; namely,—

“ We all have heard how Jonaker's † sons,  
Whom weapons could not touch, with stones  
Were stoned to death—in open day,  
King Onund died in the same way.  
Or else perhaps the wood-grown land,  
Which long had felt his conquering hand,  
Uprose at length in deadly strife,  
And pressed out Onund's hated life.”

who overwhelmed the Roman empire. The name is written by Snorre *Gautland*.—L.

\* *Gautland* (Swedish, *Götaland*) is the land of the Gauts, and is to be distinguished from the island *Gotland* in the Baltic Sea. *Gaut* was one of the many names of *Odin*.

† *Jonaker* was a king in the *Edda* whose sons were stoned to death, because steel weapons could not wound them. The meaning is, that *Onund* was killed in the same way by stones—which the earth may have showered down upon him for his cutting down wood and improving land.—L.

CHAPTER XL.—*The Burning in Upsala.*

Then Ingiald, King Onund's son, came to the kingdom. The Upsala kings were the highest in Svithiod among the many district-kings who had been since the time that Odin was chief. The kings who resided at Upsala had been the supreme chiefs over the whole Swedish dominions until the death of Agne, when, as before related, the kingdom came to be divided between brothers. After that time the dominions and kingly powers were spread among the branches of the family as these increased; but some kings cleared great tracks of forest-land, and settled them, and thereby increased their domains. Now when Ingiald took the dominions and the kingdom of his father, there were, as before said, many district-kings. King Ingiald ordered a great feast to be prepared in Upsala, and intended to enter at it on his heritage after King Onund his father. He had a large hall made ready for the occasion,—one not less, nor less sumptuous, than that of Upsala; and this hall was called the Seven Kings' Hall, and in it were seven high-seats, for kings. Then King Ingiald sent men all through Svithiod, and invited to his feast kings, earls, and other men of consequence. To this heir-feast came King Algaute, his father-in-law; Yngvar king of Fiadrundaland, with his two sons, Alf and Agnar; King Sporsnial of Nerike; King Sigvat of Attundaland: but Granmar king of Sudermannaland did not come.

Six kings were placed in the seats in the new hall ; but one of the high-seats which Ingiald had prepared was empty. All the persons who had come got places in the new hall ; but to his own court, and the rest of his people, he had appointed places at Upsala. It was the custom at that time that he who gave an heirship-feast after kings or earls, and entered upon the heritage, should sit upon the footstool in front of the high-seat, until the full bowl, which was called the Brage-bowl, was brought in.\* Then he should stand up, take the Brage-bowl, make solemn vows to be afterwards fulfilled, and thereupon empty the bowl. Then he should ascend the high-seat which his father had occupied ; and thus he came to the full heritage after his father. Now it was done so on this occasion. When the full Brage-bowl came in, King Ingiald stood up, grasped a large bull's horn, and made a solemn vow to enlarge his dominions by one half, towards all the four corners of the world, or die ; and thereupon pointed with the horn to the four quarters. Now when the guests had become drunk towards evening King Ingiald told Svipdag's sons, Folkvid and Hulvid, to arm themselves and their men, as had before been settled ; and accordingly they went out, and came up to the new hall, and set fire to it. The hall was soon in a blaze, and the six kings, with all their people, were burned in it. Those who tried to come

\* The bowl drunk in honour of Brage, the god of poetry. At banquets the gods were first toasted. After the introduction of Christianity, the first toasts were consecrated to Christ and to the saints. On the vows taken see Olaf Trygvesson's Saga, chapter 39.

out were killed. Then King Ingiald laid all the dominions these kings had possessed under himself, and took scat from them.

CHAPTER XLI.—*Of Hiorvard's Marriage.*

When King Granmar heard the news of this treachery, he thought the same lot awaited him if he did not take care. The same summer King Hiorvard, who was surnamed Ylfing,\* came with his fleet to Svithiod, and went into a fiord called Myrkva-fiord.† When King Granmar heard this he sent a messenger to him to invite him and all his men to a feast. He accepted it willingly; for he had never committed waste in King Granmar's dominions. When he came to the feast he was gladly welcomed. In the evening, when the full bowls went round, as was the custom of kings when they were at home, or in the feasts they ordered to be made, they drank together, the men and women with each other in pairs, and the rest of the company drank all round in one set. But it was the law among the vikings that all who were at the entertainment should drink together in one company all round. King Hiorvard's high-seat was placed right opposite to King Granmar's high-seat, and on the same bench sat all his men. King Granmar told his daughter Hildigun, who was a remarkably beautiful girl, to make ready to carry ale

\* The Ylfings were an ancient royal family, mentioned both in the *Beowulf* poem and in the *Elder Edda*. They appear to have resided in southern Sweden. An Ylfing is a descendant of Ulf.

† Now Morköfjord, in Sodermanland province.—L.

to the vikings. Thereupon she took a silver goblet, filled it, bowed before King Hiorvard, and said, "Success to all Ylfings: this cup to the memory of Rolf Krake,"—drank out the half, and handed the cup to King Hiorvard. He took the cup, and took her hand, and said she must sit beside him. She says, that is not viking fashion to drink two and two with women. Hiorvard replies, that it were better for him to make a change and leave the viking law and drink in company with her. Then Hildigun sat down beside him, and both drank together, and spoke a great deal with each other during the evening. The next day, when King Granmar and Hiorvard met, Hiorvard spoke of his courtship, and asked to have Hildigun in marriage. King Granmar laid his proposal before his wife Hild, and before people of consequence, saying they would have great help and trust in Hiorvard; and all approved of it highly, and thought it very advisable. And the end was, that Hildigun was promised to Hiorvard, and the wedding followed soon after; and King Hiorvard stayed with King Granmar, who had no sons, to help him to defend his dominions.

CHAPTER XLII.—*War between Ingiald and Granmar and Hiorvard.*

The same autumn King Ingiald collected a war-force with which he intended to fall upon these two relations; he had warriors from all the realms which he had conquered. But when they heard it

they also collected a force, and Hogne, who ruled over East Gautland, together with his son Hilder, came to their assistance. Hogne was father of Hilder, who was married to King Granmar. King Ingiald landed with his army, which was by far the most numerous. A battle began, which was very sharp; but after it had lasted a short time, the chiefs who ruled over Fiadrundaland, West Gautland, Nerike, and Attundaland, took to flight with all the men from those countries, and hastened to their ships. This placed King Ingiald in great danger, and he received many wounds, but escaped by flight to his ships. Svipdag the Blind, Ingiald's foster-father, together with his sons, Gautvid and Hulved, fell. Ingiald returned to Upsala very ill satisfied with his expedition; and he thought the army levied from those countries he had acquired by conquest had been unfaithful to him. There was great hostility afterwards between King Ingiald and King Granmar, and his son-in-law King Hiorvard; and after this had continued a long time the friends of both parties brought about a reconciliation. The king appointed a meeting, and concluded a peace. This peace was to endure as long as the three kings lived, and this was confirmed by oath and promises of fidelity. The spring after King Granmar went to Upsala to make offering, as usual, for a steady peace. Then the foreboding\* turned out for him so that it did not promise him long life, and he returned to his dominions.

\* That is, resulting from the offering.

CHAPTER XLIII.—*Death of the Kings Granmar and Hiorvard.*

The autumn after, King Granmar and his son-in-law Hiorvard went to a feast at one of their farms in the island Sile.\* When they were at the entertainment, King Ingiald came there in the night with his troops, surrounded the house, and burnt them in it, with all their men. Then he took to himself all the country these kings had possessed, and placed chiefs over it. King Hogne and his son Hilder often made inroads on horseback into the Swedish dominions, and killed King Ingiald's men, whom he had placed over the kingdom which had belonged to their relation Granmar. This strife between King Ingiald and King Hogne continued for a long time; but King Hogne defended his kingdom against King Ingiald to his dying day. King Ingiald had two children by his wife;—the eldest called Asa, the other Olaf Wood-carver. Gauthild, the wife of Ingiald, sent the boy to his foster-father Bove, in West Gautland, where he was brought up along with Saxe, Bove's son, who had the surname of Fletter.† It was a common saying that King Ingiald had killed twelve kings, and deceived them all under pretence of peace; therefore he was called Ingiald the Evil-adviser (Illrade). He was king over the greater part of Sweden. He married his daughter Asa to Gudrod king of Scania; and she was like her father in disposition. Asa

\* Now Sela isle, in the Mælar lake.—L.

† One who braids his hair.

brought it about that Gudrod killed his brother Halfdan, father of Ivar Vidfadme; and also she brought about the death of her husband Gudrod, and then fled to her father; and she thus got the name also of Asa the Evil-adviser.

CHAPTER XLIV.—*Of Ingiald Illrade's Death.*

Ivar Vidfadme came to Scania after the fall of his uncle Gudrod, and collected an army in all haste, and moved with it into Svithiod. Asa had gone to her father before. King Ingiald was at a feast in Raning,\* when he heard that King Ivar's army was in the neighbourhood. Ingiald thought he had not strength to go into battle against Ivar, and he saw well that if he betook himself to flight his enemies would swarm around him from all corners. He and Asa took a resolution which has become celebrated. They drank until all their people were dead drunk, and then put fire to the hall; and it was consumed, with all who were in it, including themselves, King Ingiald, and Asa. Thus says Thiodolf:—

“With fiery feet devouring flame  
Has hunted down a royal game  
At Raning, where King Ingiald gave  
To all his men one glowing grave.  
On his own hearth the fire he raised,  
A deed his foeman even praised;  
By his own hand he perished so,  
And life for freedom did forego.”

\* Ranninge, a village in Fogd isle, in the Mælar lake, is supposed to have been the Raning of the saga. A large circle of stones, or a wall, remains, still called Ranningeborg, on a heath.—L.



CHAPTER XLV.—*Of Ivar Vidfadme.*

Ivar Vidfadme subdued the whole of Sweden. He brought in subjection to himself all the Danish dominions, a great deal of Saxland, all the East country,\* and a fifth part of England. From his race the kings of Sweden and Denmark who have had the supreme authority in those countries, are descended. After Ingiald the Evil-adviser the Upsala dominion fell from the Yngve race, notwithstanding the length of time they could reckon up the series of their forefathers.

CHAPTER XLVI.—*Of Olaf the Tree-feller.*

When Olaf, King Ingiald's son, heard of his father's end, he went, with the men who chose to follow him, to Nerike; for all the Swedish community rose with one accord to drive out Ingiald's family and all its friends. Now, when the Swedes got intelligence of him he could not remain there, but went on westwards, through the forest, to a river which comes from the north and falls into the Vener lake, and is called the Elf.† There they sat themselves down, turned to, and cleared the woods, burnt, and then settled there. Soon there were great districts, which altogether were called Vermaland; and a good living was to be made there. Now when it

\* By East country is meant the eastern shores of the Baltic, *i.e.*, Esthland and Kurland.

† Elf means river, and is the old name of the Klara river, flowing through Vermaland, and called at its source in Norway Trysil.

was told of Olaf, in Sweden, that he was clearing the forests, they laughed at his proceedings, and called him the Tree-feller. Olaf got a wife called Solva, or Solveig, a daughter of Halfdan Gulltan, westward in Soley Islands. Halfdan was a son of Solve Solveson, who was a son of Solve the Old, who first settled on these islands. Olaf Tree-feller's mother was called Gauthild, and her mother was Alof, daughter of Olaf Skygne, king in Nerike. Olaf and Solveig had two sons, Ingiald and Halfdan. Halfdan was brought up in Soley Isles, in the house of his mother's brother Solve, and was called Halfdan Hvitbein.

CHAPTER XLVII.—*Olaf the Tree-feller Burned.*

There were a great many people who fled the country from Svithiod, on account of King Ivar; and when they heard that King Olaf had got good lands in Vermaland, so great a number came there to him that the land could not support them. Then there came dear times and famine, which they ascribed to their king; as the Swedes used always to reckon good or bad crops for or against their kings. The Swedes took it amiss that Olaf was sparing in his sacrifices, and believed the dear times must proceed from this cause. The Swedes therefore gathered together troops, made an expedition against King Olaf, surrounded his house, and burnt him in it, giving him to Odin as a sacrifice for good crops. This happened at the Vener lake. Thus tells Thiodolf of it:—

“ The temple wolf,\* by the lake shores,  
 The corpse of Olaf now devours.  
 The clearer of the forests† died  
 At Odin’s shrine by the lake side.  
 The glowing flames stripped to the skin  
 The royal robes from the Swedes’ king.  
 Thus Olaf, famed in days of yore,  
 Vanished from earth at Vener’s shore.”

CHAPTER XLVIII.—*Halfdan Hvitbein made King.*

Those of the Swedes who had more understanding found that the dear times proceeded from there being a greater number of people on the land than it could support, and that the king could not be blamed for this. They took the resolution, therefore, to cross the Eid forest‡ with all their men, and came quite unexpectedly into Soleys, where they put to death King Solve, and took Halfdan Hvitbein prisoner, and made him their chief, and gave him the title of king. Thereupon he subdued Soleys, and proceeding with his army into Raumarike, plundered there, and laid that district also in subjection by force of arms.

CHAPTER XLIX.—*Of Halfdan Hvitbein.*

Halfdan Hvitbein became a great king. He was married to Asa, a daughter of Eystein the Severe, who was king of the Upland people, and ruled over Hedemark. Halfdan and Asa had two sons, Eystein and Gudrod. Halfdan subdued a great part of Hede-

\* The temple wolf—the fire which devoured the body of Olaf.—L.

† Olaf was called the Tree-feller.—L.

‡ Eydaskogr, a great uninhabited forest, which then, and to a late period, covered the frontier of Norway towards Sweden on the south.—L.

mark, Thoten, Hadeland, and much of Vestfold.\* He lived to be an old man, and died in his bed at Thoten, from whence his body was transported to Vestfold, and was buried under a mound at a place called Skareid, at Skiringsal.† So says Thiodolf:—

“ Halfdan, esteemed by friends and foes,  
Receives at last life's deep repose :  
The aged man at last, though late,  
Yielded in Thoten to stern fate.  
At Skiringsal hangs o'er his grave  
A rock, that seems to mourn the brave.  
Halfdan, to chiefs and people dear,  
Received from all a silent tear.”

#### CHAPTER L.—*Of Ingiald, Brother of Halfdan.*

Ingiald, Halfdan's brother, was king of Vermaland; but after his death King Halfdan took possession of Vermaland, raised scat from it, and placed earls over it as long as he lived.

#### CHAPTER LI.—*Of King Eystein's Death.*

Eystein, Halfdan Hvitbein's son, became king after in Raumarike and Vestfold. He was married to

\* Hedemark, Thoten, Hadeland, Vestfold, and the Uplands or Highlands, are all districts in Norway, and in the south of Norway; except the Uplands, which apparently included the upper parts of the valleys of which the waters flow northwards from the dividing ridge, the Dovrefield.—L.

† Skiringssal is rather a place of note. It is called “Sciringshael” in the Voyage of Ottar of Halogaland, written by our King Alfred in the end of the ninth century, and the most learned antiquaries have been puzzled where to look for it. Scania, the neighbourhood of Stockholm, and even Prussia, have been considered the true locality of this ancient seat of trade. The Norwegian antiquary Jacob Aal, in his translation of Snorre, places Skiringsal in Vestfold, in Tiolling parish, in the bailiwick of Laurvig; and the situation, access, ancient names, and remains of tumuli around, make this the probable site of the merchant town of Sciringshael.—L.

Hild, a daughter of Eirik Agnarson, who was king in Vestfold. Agnar, Eirik's father, was a son of Sigtryg, king in the Vendel district. King Eirik had no son, and died while King Halfdan Hvitbein was still in life. The father and son, Halfdan and Eystein, then took possession of the whole of Vestfold, which Eystein ruled over as long as he lived. At that time there lived at Varna a king called Skiold, who was a great warlock. King Eystein went with some ships of war to Varna, plundered there, and carried away all he could find of clothes or other valuables, and of peasants' stock, and killed cattle on the strand for provision, and then went off. King Skiold came to the strand with his army, just as Eystein was at such a distance over the fiord that King Skiold could only see his sails. Then he took his cloak, waved it, and blew into it. King Eystein was sitting at the helm as they sailed within the Earl Isle, and another ship was sailing at the side of his, when there came a stroke of a wave, by which the boom of the other ship struck the king and threw him overboard, which proved his death. His men fished up his body, and it was carried into Borro, where a mound was thrown up over it, upon a cleared field out towards the sea at Vadla.\* So says Thiodolf:—

“King Eystein sat upon the poop  
Of his good ship : with sudden swoop

\* Now the farm Vold, on which the mounds of Eystein and his son Halfdan and others still remain. It adjoins Borre, about six miles from Tunsberg.—L.

The swinging boom dashed him to hell,  
 And fathoms deep the hero fell  
 Beneath the brine. The fury whirl  
 Of Loke,\* Tempest's brother's girl,  
 Grim Hel, clutched his soul away ;  
 And now where Vadla's ocean bay  
 Receives the ice-cold stream, the grave  
 Of Eystein stands,—the good, the brave !”

CHAPTER LII.—*Of Halfdan the Mild.*

Halfdan was the name of King Eystein's son who succeeded him. He was called Halfdan the Mild, but the Bad Entertainer ; that is to say, he was reported to be generous, and to give his men as much gold as other kings gave of silver, but he starved them in their diet. He was a great warrior, who had been long in viking cruises, and had collected great property. He was married to Hlif, a daughter of King Dag of Vestmarar. Holtar, in Vestfold, was his chief house ; and he died there on the bed of sickness, and was buried at Borro under a mound. So says Thiodolf:—

“ By Hel's summons, a great king  
 Was called away to Odin's Thing :  
 King Halfdan, he who dwelt of late  
 At Holtar, must obey grim Fate.  
 At Borro, in the royal mound,  
 They laid the hero in the ground.”

CHAPTER LIII.—*Of Gudrod the Hunter.*

Gudrod, Halfdan's son, succeeded. He was called Gudrod the Magnificent, and also Gudrod the Hunter.

\* Loke (the evil principle) was brother of Byleist, the god of tempests ; and Loke's daughter was Hel—from which probably our word Hell, the abode of evil spirits, is derived.—L.

He was married to Alfild, a daughter of King Alfarin of Alfheim, and got with her half the district of Vingulmark. Their son Olaf was afterwards called Geirstada-Alf. Alfheim, at that time, was the name of the land between the Raum and Gaut rivers. Now when Alfild died, King Gudrod sent his men west to Agder to the king who ruled there, and who was called Harald Redbeard. They were to make proposals to his daughter Asa upon the king's account; but Harald declined the match, and the ambassadors returned to the king, and told him the result of their errand. Soon after King Gudrod hove down his ships into the water, and proceeded with a great force in them to Agder. He immediately landed, and came altogether unexpectedly, at night, to King Harald's house. When Harald was aware that an army was at hand, he went out with the men he had about him, and there was a great battle, although he wanted men so much. King Harald and his son Gyrð fell, and King Gudrod took a great booty. He carried away with him Asa, King Harald's daughter, and had a wedding with her. They had a son by their marriage called Halfdan; and the autumn that Halfdan was a year old Gudrod went upon a round of feasts. He lay with his ship in Stiflusund, where they had been drinking hard, so that the king was very tipsy. In the evening, about dark, the king left the ship; and when he had got to the end of the gangway from the ship to the shore,\*

\* The ships appear generally to have been laid all night close to or at the shore, with a gangway to land by; and the crew appear to have had tents on shore to pass the night in.—L.

a man ran against him, thrust a spear through him, and killed him. The man was instantly put to death, and in the morning when it was light the man was discovered to be Asa's footboy : nor did she conceal that it was done by her orders. Thus tells Thiodolf of it :—

“Gudrod is gone to his long rest,  
Despite of all his haughty pride,—  
A traitor's spear has pierced his side :  
For Asa cherished in her breast  
Revenge ; and as, by wine opprest,  
The hero staggered from his ship,  
The cruel queen her thrall let slip  
To do the deed of which I sing :  
And now the far-descended king,  
At Stifusund, in the old bed  
Of the old Gudrod race, lies dead.”

#### CHAPTER LIV.—*Of King Olaf's Death.*

Olaf came to the kingdom after his father. He was a great warrior, and an able man ; and was besides remarkably handsome, very strong, and large of growth. He had Vestfold ; for King Alfgeir took all Vingulmark to himself, and placed his son Gandalf over it. Both father and son made war on Raumarike, and subdued the greater part of that land and district. Hogne was the name of a son of the Upland king, Eystein the Great, who subdued for himself the whole of Hedemark, Thoten, and Hadeland. Then Vermaland fell off from Gudrod's sons, and turned itself, with its payment of scat, to the Swedish king. Olaf was about twenty years old when Gudrod died ; and as his brother Halfdan now had the kingdom



with him, they divided it between them; so that Olaf got the eastern, and Halfdan the southern part. King Olaf had his main residence at Geirstad.\* There he died of a disease in his foot, and was laid under a mound at Geirstad. So sings Thiodolf:—

“Long while this branch of Odin’s stem  
Was the stout prop of Norway’s realm;  
Long while King Olaf with just pride  
Ruled over Vestfold far and wide.  
At length by cruel gout oppressed,  
The good King Olaf sank to rest:  
His body now lies underground,  
Buried at Geirstad, in the mound.”

CHAPTER LV.—*Of Ragnvald the Mountain-high.*

Ragnvald was the name of Olaf’s son who was king of Vestfold after his father. He was called “Mountain-high,” and Thiodolf of Hvin composed for him the “Ynglinga-tal;”† in which he says:—

“Under the heaven’s blue dome, a name  
I never knew more true to fame  
Than Ragnvald bore; whose skilful hand  
Could tame the scorners of the land,—  
Ragnvald, who knew so well to guide  
The wild sea-horses‡ through the tide:  
The ‘Mountain-high’ was the proud name  
By which the king was known to fame.”

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\* Geirstadir. This ancient seat of royalty in small is now supposed to have been a farm called Gierrestad, in the same parish, Tiolling, in which Skiringsal was situated.—L.

† Ynglinga-tal—the succession of the Yngling race. Our word tale applied to numbers, as things told over one by one, appears connected with this word.—L.

‡ The wild sea-horses—ships, which are generally called the horses of the ocean in skaldic poetry.—L.

## II.

## HALFDAN THE BLACK'S SAGA.\*

CHAPTER I.—*Halfdan Fights with Gandalf and Sigtryg.*

HALFDAN was a year old when his father † was killed, and his mother Asa set off immediately with him westwards to Agder, and set herself there in the kingdom which her father Harald had possessed. Halfdan grew up there, and soon became stout and strong; and, by reason of his black hair, was called Halfdan the Black. When he was eighteen years old he took his kingdom in Agder, and went immediately to Vestfold, where he divided that kingdom, as before related, with his brother Olaf. The same autumn he went with an army to Vingulmark against King Gandalf. They had many battles, and sometimes one, sometimes the other gained the victory; but at last they agreed that Halfdan should have half of Vingulmark, as his father Gudrod had had it before.

\* Halfdan the Black reigned from about the year 821 to about 860. In the preceding Saga of the Yngling race, there are but few points to be fixed down as historical by dates and coincidences with other history; and the earlier part of it belongs to mythology, not to history. Facts there are—we hold them to be facts only because they are not extravagant enough to be fables—intermingled with the mythological accounts of Odin and his times; but Snorre with great judgment goes over this period rapidly, and comes as quickly as possible to the period when authentic history begins to dawn,—to the reigns of Halfdan and Harald Harfager. Their royal derivation from the Yngve race (the Ynglings) could not be omitted; but Snorre hastens over it, as only a necessary preface to his more authentic narratives.—L.

† King Gudrod, son of Halfdan. See Ynglinga Saga, chapter 53.

Then King Halfdan proceeded to Raumarike, and subdued it. King Sigtryg, son of King Eystein, who then had his residence in Hedemark, and who had subdued Raumarike before, having heard of this, came out with his army against King Halfdan, and there was a great battle, in which King Halfdan was victorious; and just as King Sigtryg and his troops were turning about to fly, an arrow struck him under the left arm, and he fell dead. Halfdan then laid the whole of Raumarike under his power. King Eystein's second son, King Sigtryg's brother, was also called Eystein, and was then king in Hedemark. As soon as Halfdan had returned to Vestfold, King Eystein went out with his army to Raumarike, and laid the whole country in subjection to him.

CHAPTER II.—*Battle between Halfdan and Eystein.*

When King Halfdan heard of these disturbances in Raumarike, he again gathered his army together; and went out against King Eystein. A battle took place between them, and Halfdan gained the victory, and Eystein fled up to Hedemark, pursued by Halfdan. Another battle took place, in which Halfdan was again victorious; and Eystein fled northwards, up into the Dales\* to the herse † Gud-

\* The Dales (*Dalir*) included what is now called Gudbrandsdalen and Osterdalen.

† The herse (Icelandic, *hersir*) was the political name of the Norse chiefs or lords of the oldest age, especially before Harald Harfager and the settlement of Iceland. The records respecting the office are scanty, as they chiefly belonged to pre-historical times. They were probably not liegemen, but resembled the godes of the old Icelandic common-

brand. There he was strengthened with new people, and in winter he went towards Hedemark, and met Halfdan the Black upon a large island which lies in the Mjosen lake. There a great battle was fought, and many people on both sides were slain, but Halfdan won the victory. There fell Guthorm, the son of the herse Gudbrand, who was one of the finest men in the Uplands. Then Eystein fled north up the valley, and sent his relation Halvard Skalk to King Halfdan to beg for peace. On consideration of their relationship, King Halfdan gave King Eystein half of Hedemark, which he and his relations had held before; but kept to himself Thoten, and the land so called. He likewise appropriated to himself Hadeland; and he plundered far and wide around, and was become a mighty king.

### CHAPTER III.—*Halfdan's Marriage.*

Halfdan the Black got a wife called Ragnhild, a daughter of Harald Goldbeard, who was a king in Sogn. They had a son, to whom Harald gave his own name; and the boy was brought up in Sogn, by his mother's father, King Harald. Now when this Harald had lived out his days nearly, and was become weak, having no son, he gave his dominions to his daughter's son Harald, and gave him his title of king; and he died soon after. The same winter his daughter Ragnhild died; and the following spring

wealth, being a kind of patriarchal and hereditary chiefs. The old Norse hersees were no doubt the prototypes of the barons of Normandy and Norman England. See Vigfusson, *s.v.*

the young Harald fell sick, and died at ten years of age. As soon as Halfdan the Black heard of his son's death, he took the road northwards to Sogn with a great force, and was well received. He claimed the heritage and dominion after his son; and no opposition being made, he took the whole kingdom. Earl Atle Mjove (the Slender), who was a friend of King Halfdan, came to him from Gaular; and the king set him over the Sogn district, to judge in the country according to the country's laws, and collect scat upon the king's account. Thereafter King Halfdan proceeded to his kingdom in the Uplands.

#### CHAPTER IV.—*Halfdan's Strife with Gandalf's Sons.*

In autumn, King Halfdan proceeded to Vingulmark. One night when he was there in guest quarters, it happened that about midnight a man came to him who had been on the watch on horseback, and told him a war force was come near to the house. The king instantly got up, ordered his men to arm themselves, and went out of the house and drew them up in battle order. At the same moment, Gandalf's sons, Hysing and Helsing, made their appearance with a large army. There was a great battle; but Halfdan being overpowered by the numbers of people, fled to the forest, leaving many of his men on this spot. His foster-father, Olver the Wise, fell here. The people now came in swarms to King Halfdan, and he advanced to seek Gandalf's

sons. They met at Eid, near Eyna,\* and fought there. Hysing and Helsing fell, and their brother Hake saved himself by flight. King Halfdan then took possession of the whole of Vingulmark, and Hake fled to Alfheim.

CHAPTER V.—*King Halfdan's last Marriage with Sigurd Hiort's Daughter.*

Sigurd Hiort was the name of a king in Ringerike, who was stouter and stronger than any other man, and his equal could not be seen for a handsome appearance. His father was Helge the Sharp; and his mother was Aslaug, a daughter of Sigurd the Worm-eyed, who again was a son of Ragnar Lodbrok. It is told of Sigurd, that when he was only twelve years old he killed in single combat the berserk Hildebrand, and eleven others of his comrades; and many are the deeds of manhood told of him in a long saga about his feats.† Sigurd had two children, one of whom was a daughter, called Ragnhild, then twenty years of age, and an excellent brisk girl. Her brother Guthorm was a youth. It is related that Sigurd had a custom of riding out quite alone in the uninhabited forest to hunt the wild beasts that are hurtful to man, and he was always very eager at this sport. One day he rode out into the forest as usual, and when he had ridden a long way he came out at a piece of cleared land near to

\* The old name for the present Lake Oyeren, in the south-eastern part of Norway, written also Oieren.

† This saga is lost, but it is quoted in a fragment concerning Ragnar's sons. (*Script. rerum danicarum*, ii. 284.)

Hadeland. There the berserk Hake came against him with thirty men, and they fought. Sigurd Hiort fell there, after killing twelve of Hake's men; and Hake himself lost one hand, and had three other wounds. Then Hake and his men rode to Sigurd's house, where they took his daughter Ragnhild and her brother Guthorm, and carried them, with much property and valuable articles, home to Hadeland, where Hake had many great farms. He ordered a feast to be prepared, intending to hold his wedding with Ragnhild; but the time passed on account of his wounds, which healed slowly; and the berserk Hake of Hadeland had to keep his bed, on account of his wounds, all the autumn and beginning of winter. Now King Halfdan was in Hedemark at the Yule entertainments when he heard this news; and one morning early, when the king was dressed, he called to him Harek Gand, and told him to go over to Hadeland, and bring him Ragnhild, Sigurd Hiort's daughter. Harek got ready with a hundred men, and made his journey so that they came over the lake to Hake's house in the grey of the morning, and beset all the doors and stairs of the places where the house-servants slept. Then they broke into the sleeping-room where Hake slept, took Ragnhild, with her brother Guthorm, and all the goods that were there, and set fire to the house-servants' place, and burnt all the people in it. Then they covered over a magnificent waggon, placed Ragnhild and Guthorm in it, and drove down upon the ice. Hake got up and went after them a while; but when he

came to the ice on the lake, he turned his sword-hilt to the ground and let himself fall upon the point, so that the sword went through him. He was buried under a mound on the banks of the lake. When King Halfdan, who was very quick of sight, saw the party returning over the frozen lake, and with a covered waggon, he knew that their errand was accomplished according to his desire. Thereupon he ordered the tables to be set out, and sent people all round in the neighbourhood to invite plenty of guests; and the same day there was a good feast which was also Halfdan's marriage-feast with Ragnhild, who became a great queen. Ragnhild's mother was Thorny, a daughter of Harald Klak, king in Jutland, and a sister of Thyre Dannebod, who was married to the Danish king, Gorm the Old, who then ruled over the Danish dominions.

#### CHAPTER VI.—*Of Ragnhild's Dream.*

Ragnhild, who was wise and intelligent, dreamt great dreams. She dreamt, for one, that she was standing out in her herb-garden, and she took a thorn out of her shift; but while she was holding the thorn in her hand, it grew so that it became a great tree, one end of which struck itself down into the earth, and it became firmly rooted; and the other end of the tree raised itself so high in the air that she could scarcely see over it, and it became also wonderfully thick. The under part of the tree was red with blood, but the stem upwards was beautifully



green, and the branches white as snow. There were many and great limbs to the tree, some high up, others low down; and so vast were the tree's branches that they seemed to her to cover all Norway, and even much more.\*

CHAPTER VII.—*Of Halfdan's Dream.*

King Halfdan never had dreams, which appeared to him an extraordinary circumstance; and he told it to a man called Thorleif the Wise, and asked him what his advice was about it. Thorleif said that what he himself did, when he wanted to have any revelation by dream, was to take his sleep in a swine-sty, and then it never failed that he had dreams. The king did so, and the following dream was revealed to him. He thought he had the most beautiful hair, which was all in ringlets; some so long as to fall upon the ground, some reaching to the middle of his legs, some to his knees, some to his loins or the middle of his sides, some to his neck, and some were only as knots springing from his head. These ringlets were of various colours; but one ringlet surpassed all the others in beauty, lustre, and size. This dream he told to Thorleif, who interpreted it thus:—There should be a great posterity from him, and his descendants should rule over countries with great, but not all with equally great honour; but one of his race should be more celebrated than

\* See Chapter XLV. of *Harald Harfager's Saga*, where this dream is interpreted as applying to *Harald Fairhair*.

all the others. It was the opinion of people that this ringlet betokened King Olaf the Saint.

King Halfdan was a wise man, a man of truth and uprightness—who made laws,\* observed them himself, and obliged others to observe them. And that violence should not come in place of the laws, he himself fixed the number of criminal acts in law, and the compensations, mulcts, or penalties, for each case, according to every one's birth and dignity.†

Queen Ragnhild gave birth to a son, and water was poured over him, and the name of Harald given him, and he soon grew stout and remarkably handsome. As he grew up he became very expert at all feats, and showed also a good understanding. He was much beloved by his mother, but less so by his father.

#### CHAPTER VIII.—*Halfdan's Meat vanishes at a Feast.*

King Halfdan was at a Yule-feast in Hadeland, where a wonderful thing happened one Yule ‡ even-

\* He was the author of the so-called Eidsiva-law. See Preliminary Dissertation.

† The penalty, compensation, or manbod for every injury, due to the party injured, or to his family and next of kin if the injury was the death or premeditated murder of the party, appears to have been fixed for every rank and condition, from the murder of the king down to the maiming or beating a man's cattle or his slave. A man for whom no compensation was due was a dishonoured person, or an outlaw. It appears to have been optional with the injured party, or his kin if he had been killed, to take the mulct or compensation, or to refuse it, and wait an opportunity of taking vengeance for the injury on the party who inflicted it, or on his kin. A part of each mulct or compensation was due to the king; and these fines or penalties appear to have constituted a great proportion of the king's revenues, and to have been settled in the Things held in every district for administering the law with the lagman.—L.

‡ The feast of Jolner, one of the names of Odin, was celebrated

ing. When the great number of guests assembled were going to sit down to table, all the meat and all the ale\* disappeared from the table. The king sat alone very confused in mind; all the others set off, each to his home, in consternation. That the king might come to some certainty about what had occasioned this event, he ordered a Fin to be seized who was particularly knowing, and tried to force him to disclose the truth; but however much he tortured the man, he got nothing out of him. The Fin sought help particularly from Harald, the king's son; and Harald begged for mercy for him, but in vain. Then Harald let him escape against the king's will, and accompanied the man himself. On their journey they came to a place where the man's chief had a great feast, and it appears they were well received there. When they had been there until spring, the chief said, "Thy father took it much amiss that in winter I took some provisions from him,—now I will repay it to thee by a joyful piece of news: thy father is dead; and now thou shalt return home, and take possession of the whole kingdom which he had, and with it thou shalt lay the whole kingdom of Norway under thee."

by the pagan Northmen in mid-winter; and the name of Yule and the festivity were made to coincide with the Christmas of the Church of Rome, which is called Yule all over the North, from Jolner. In Scotland, as well as in Scandinavia, Yule is the name given to the Christmas holidays.—L.

\* The Icelandic word is *mungat*, which means a finer sort of ale. There are many accounts in Scandinavia of the disappearance of the food and drink through the agency of spirits.

CHAPTER IX.—*Halfdan's Death.*

Halfdan the Black was driving from a feast \* in Hadeland, and it so happened that his road lay over the lake called Rand.† It was in spring, and there was a great thaw. They drove across the bight called Rykinsvik, where in winter there had been a pond broken in the ice for cattle to drink at, and where the dung had fallen upon the ice the thaw had eaten it into holes. Now as the king drove over it the ice broke, and King Halfdan and many with him perished. He was then forty years old. He had been one of the most fortunate kings in respect of good seasons. The people thought so much of him, that when his death was known, and his body was floated to Ringerike to bury it there, the people of most consequence from Raumarike, Vestfold, and Hedemark, came to meet it. All desired to take the body with them to bury it in their own district, and they thought that those who got it would have good crops to expect. At last it was agreed to divide the body into four parts. The head was laid in a mound at Stein in Ringerike, and each of the others took his part home and laid it in a mound; and these have since been called Halfdan's Mounds.‡

\* According to *Fagrskinna* the feast was given at a gard called Brandabo.

† The lake now called Rands-fiord; and the bight called Rykinsvik is at a farm called Röken.—L.

‡ The Flatey-bok gives Vingulmark instead of Hedemark. One MS. of *Fagrskinna* states that the entrails were buried in Tingelstad, the body at Stein, and the head at Skiringsal in Vestfold.

## III.

## HARALD HARFAGER'S SAGA.\*

CHAPTER I.—*Harald's Strife with Hake and his Father Gandalf.*

HARALD<sup>†</sup> was but ten years old when he succeeded his father (Halfdan the Black). He became a stout, strong, and comely man, and withal prudent and

\* The first twenty chapters of this saga refer to Harald's youth and his conquest of Norway. This portion of the saga is of great importance to the Icelanders, as the settlement of their isle was a result of Harald's wars. The second part of the saga (chaps. 21-46) treats of the disputes between Harald's sons, of the jarls of Orkney, and of the jarls of More. With this saga we enter the domain of history.

The following Icelandic sagas treat more or less of Harald Harfager's time:—

1. Egil Skallagrimsons Saga.
2. Vatnsdæla Saga (chaps. 1-16).
3. Floamanna Saga (chaps. 1-7).
4. Eyrbyggja Saga (chaps. 1-9).
5. Laxdæla Saga (chaps. 1-6).
6. Gullthoris Saga.
7. Kormaks Saga.
8. Gísla Saga Surssonar.
9. Svarfdæla Saga.
10. Grettis Saga.
11. Landnama-bok.
12. Íslendinga-bok.
13. Sturlunga Saga. First part.
14. Fagrskinna (chaps. 5-24).

The skalds in Harald's time were Odin Ondskald, Thorbjorn Hornklofe, Alver Nufva, Thjodolf of Hvin, Ulf Sebbason, Guthorm Sindre, Torf-Einar, and Jorun.

Harald Harfager reigned from about the year 860 to about the year 930. Pinkerton thinks Torfæus dates his reign thirty years too far back, and that Harald Harfager's reign began in 900 or 910. As he agrees, however, in placing his death in 931 or 936, the only difference between the two antiquaries is, that Torfæus begins to reckon Harald's reign from his father's death, and Pinkerton from the subjugation of the small kings, by which he became sole king of Norway.—L.

manly. His mother's brother, Guthorm, was leader of the hird,\* at the head of the government, and commander (*hertogi*)† of the army. After Halfdan the Black's death, many chiefs coveted the dominions he had left. Among these King Gandalf was the first; then Hogne and Frode, sons of Eystein, king of Hede-mark; and also Hogne Karuson came from Ringerike. Hake, the son of Gandalf, began with an expedition of 300 men against Vestfold, marched by the main road through some valleys, and expected to come suddenly upon King Harald; while his father Gandalf sat at home with his army, and prepared to cross over the fiord into Vestfold. When Guthorm heard of this he gathered an army, and marched up the country with King Harald against Hake. They met in a valley, in which they fought a great battle, and King Harald was victorious; and there fell King Hake and most of his people. The place has since been called Hakadale. Then King Harald and Guthorm turned back, but they found King Gandalf had come to Vestfold. The two armies marched against each other, and met, and had a great battle; and it ended in King Gandalf flying, after leaving most of his men

\* A court or *hird* about the king's person were men-at-arms of the court or hird, kept in pay, and holding guard by night, even on horse-back (see chapter 4 of the preceding saga); and appear to have been an establishment coeval with the kingly power itself. This kind of paid standing army must have existed from the earliest period, where no feudal rights over vassals or retainers could give the king or his nobles a constant command of armed followers.—L.

† Hertogi (Anglo-Saxon, *heretoga*; German, *herzog*), originally a leader or commander. As a title, *duke*, it was first borne by Skale, created duke in the year 1237. In Sweden the title was introduced by the Folkung dynasty.

dead on the spot, and in that state he came back to his kingdom. Now when the sons of King Eystein in Hedemark heard the news, they expected the war would come upon them, and they sent a message to Hogne Karuson and to Herse Gudbrand, and appointed a meeting with them at Ringsaker in Hedemark.

CHAPTER II.—*King Harald overcomes Five Kings.*

After the battle King Harald and Guthorm turned back, and went with all the men they could gather through the forests towards the Uplands. They found out where the Upland kings had appointed their meeting-place, and came there about the time of midnight, without the watchmen observing them until their army was before the door of the house in which Hogne Karuson was, as well as that in which Gudbrand slept. They set fire to both houses; but King Eystein's two sons slipped out with their men, and fought for a while, until both Hogne and Frode fell. After the fall of these four chiefs, King Harald, by his relation Guthorm's success and power, subdued Hedemark, Ringerike, Gudbrandsdal, Hadeland, Thoten, Raumarike, and the whole northern part of Vingulmark. King Harald and Guthorm had thereafter war with King Gandalf, and fought several battles with him; and in the last of them King Gandalf was slain, and King Harald took the whole of his kingdom as far south as the river Raum.\*

\* The present name of the river Raum is Glommen.

CHAPTER III.—*Of Gyda, Daughter of Eirik.*

King Harald sent his men to a girl called Gyda, a daughter of King Eirik of Hordaland, who was brought up as foster-child in the house of a great bonde in Valders. The king wanted her for his concubine; for she was a remarkably handsome girl, but of high spirit withal. Now when the messengers came there, and delivered their errand to the girl, she answered, that she would not throw herself away even to take a king for her husband, who had no greater kingdom to rule over than a few districts.\* “And methinks,” said she, “it is wonderful that no king here in Norway will make the whole country subject to him, in the same way as Gorm the Old did in Denmark, or Eirik at Upsala.” The messengers thought her answer was dreadfully haughty, and asked what she thought would come of such an answer; for Harald was so mighty a man, that his invitation was good enough for her. But although she had replied to their errand differently from what they wished, they saw no chance, on this occasion, of taking her with them against her will; so they prepared to return. When they were ready, and the people followed them out, Gyda said to the messengers, “Now tell to King Harald these my words. I will only agree to be his lawful wife upon the condition that he shall first, for my sake, subject to himself the whole of Norway, so that he may rule over that kingdom as freely and

\* The word for districts in the original is *fylki*. Norway was divided into *fylkis*, and each *fylki* was governed by a *fylkir*, that is, a kinglet or king. Before the time of Harald Fairhair there were thirty-one *fylkis* in Norway.



fully as King Eirik over the Swedish dominions, or King Gorm over Denmark ; for only then, methinks, can he be called the king of a people."

#### CHAPTER IV.—*King Harald's Vow.*

Now came the messengers back to King Harald, bringing him the words of the girl, and saying she was so bold and foolish that she well deserved that the king should send a greater troop of people for her, and inflict on her some disgrace. Then answered the king, "This girl has not spoken or done so much amiss that she should be punished, but rather she should be thanked for her words. She has reminded me," said he, "of something which it appears to me wonderful I did not think of before. And now," added he, "I make the solemn vow, and take God to witness, who made me and rules over all things, that never shall I clip or comb my hair until I have subdued the whole of Norway, with scat,\* and duties, and domains ; or if not, have died in the attempt." Guthorm thanked the king warmly for his vow ; adding, that it was royal work to fulfil royal words.

#### CHAPTER V.—*The Battle in Orkadal.*

After this the two relations gather together a great force, and prepare for an expedition to the Uplands,

\* Scat was a land-tax, paid to the king in money, malt, meal, or flesh-meat, from all lands ; and was adjudged by the Thing to each king upon his accession, and being proposed and accepted as king.

In Orkney, where the land in general has been feudalised since the annexation in 1463 of the islands to the Scotch crown, the old udal tax of scat remains as an item in the feu-duties payable to the crown.—L.

and northwards up the valley (Gudbrandsdal), and north over Dovrefield; and when the king came down to the inhabited land he ordered all the men to be killed, and everything wide around to be delivered to the flames. And when the people came to know this, they fled every one where he could; some down the country to Orkadal, some to Gaulardal, some to the forests. But some begged for peace, and obtained it, on condition of joining the king and becoming his men. He met no opposition until he came to Orkadal. There a crowd of people had assembled, and he had his first battle with a king called Gryting. Harald won the victory, and King Gryting was made prisoner, and most of his people killed. He took service himself under the king, and swore fidelity to him. Thereafter all the people in Orkadal district went under King Harald, and became his men.

CHAPTER VI.—*Of King Harald's Laws for Land Property.*

King Harald made this law over all the lands he conquered, that all the udal property should belong to him; and that the bondes, both great and small, should pay him land dues for their possessions.\* Over every district he set an earl to judge according to the law of the land and to justice, and also to collect the land dues and the fines; and for this each earl received a third part of the dues, and services, and fines, for the support of his table and other

\* This appears to have been an attempt to introduce the feudal system.—L.

expenses.\* Each earl had under him four or more herses, each of whom had an estate of twenty marks yearly income bestowed on him and was bound to support twenty men-at-arms, and the earl sixty men, at their own expenses. The king had increased the land dues and burdens so much, that each of his earls had greater power and income than the kings had before; and when that became known at Throndhjem, many great men joined the king, and took his service.†

#### CHAPTER VII.—*Battle in Gaulardal.*

It is told that Earl Hakon Griotgardson came to King Harald from Yrjar,‡ and brought a great crowd of men to his service. Then King Harald went into Gaulardal, and had a great battle, in which he slew two kings, and conquered their dominions; and these were Gaulardal district and Strind district. He gave Earl Hakon Strind district to rule over as earl. King Harald then proceeded to Stjoradal, and had a third battle, in which he gained the victory, and took that district also. Thereupon the Throndhjem people assembled, and four kings met together with their troops. The one ruled over Veradal,§ the second over

\* This system of compensating officials prevailed in the North throughout the Middle Ages.

† Hakon the Good restored the udal right to the bondes. In regard to the details of King Harald's conduct in this matter, the reader is referred to Egils Saga, chap. 4.

‡ Yrjar is the present Orland, in Fossum, north of Throndhjem.

§ Veradal (Værdal), Skaun (Skogn), the Sparbyggja district (Sparbu), and Indriey (Inderöen), are small districts or parishes on the side of the Throndhjem fiord.

Skaun, third over the Sparbyggja district, and the fourth over Indriey; and this latter had also Eyna district. These four kings marched with their men against King Harald, but he won the battle; and some of these kings fell, and some fled. In all, King Harald fought at the least eight battles, and slew eight kings, in the land of Thronthjem, and laid the whole of it under him.

CHAPTER VIII.—*King Harald seizes all Naumudal District.*

North in Naumudal were two brothers, kings,—Herlaug and Hrollaug; and they had been for three summers raising a mound or tomb of stone and lime and of wood. Just as the work was finished, the brothers got the news that King Harald was coming upon them with his army. Then King Herlaug had a great quantity of meat and drink brought into the mound, and went into it himself, with eleven companions, and ordered the mound to be covered up.\* King Hrollaug, on the contrary, went upon the summit of the mound, on which the kings were wont to sit, and made a throne to be erected, upon which he seated himself. Then he ordered feather-beds to be laid upon the bench below, on which the earls were wont to be seated, and threw himself down from his

\* On the gard Skei, in Leko parish, north of Thronthjem, a mound answering this description was opened. There was an inner wall made of stone and wood, dividing it into two chambers. In one chamber were found bones of cattle, and in the other two human skeletons, one of which seemed to be in a sitting posture. This has been believed to be Herlaug's cairn. Snorre says the mound was raised of stone and lime and wood. Lime was not known in the heathen time.

high seat or throne into the earls' seat, giving himself the title of earl. Now Hrollaug went to meet King Harald, gave up to him his whole kingdom, offered to enter into his service, and told him his whole proceeding. Then took King Harald a sword, fastened it to Hrollaug's belt, bound a shield to his neck, and made him thereupon an earl, and led him to his earl's seat; and therewith gave him the district of Naumudal, and set him as earl over it.\*

CHAPTER IX.—*King Harald's Home Affairs.*

King Harald then returned to Throndhjem, where he dwelt during the winter, and always afterwards called it his home. He fixed here his head residence, which is called Lade. This winter he took to wife Asa, a daughter of Earl Hakon Griotgardson, who then stood in great favour and honour with the king. In spring the king fitted out his ships. In winter he had caused a great frigate (a dragon) to be built, and had it fitted out in the most splendid way,

\* Before writing was in general use, this symbolical way of performing all important legal acts appears to have entered into the jurisprudence of all savage nations; and according to Gibbon, chap. 44, "the jurisprudence of the first Romans exhibited the scenes of a pantomime: the words were adapted to the gestures, and the slightest error or neglect in the *forms* of proceeding was sufficient to annul the *substance* of the fairest claims." This ceremony of demission from the seat of a king, and assumption of the rank and seat of an earl, and the subsequent investiture of Hrollaug by the ceremony of binding a sword and shield on him, and leading him to the earl's seat, have probably been ceremonies adopted from the feudal countries. Harald Harfager's object appears to have been to feudalise the dominions he conquered from the small kings; but the subsequent partition of the country among his descendants, and their feuds with each other, prevented the permanency of feudal tenures under the crown; and the holdings being only personal not hereditary, were of less value than the udal rights to land.—L.

and brought his house-troops and his berserks on board. The forecastle men were picked men, for they had the king's banner. From the stem to the mid-hold was called rausn,\* or the fore-defence; and there were the berserks.† Such men only were received into King Harald's house-troop as were remarkable for strength, courage, and all kinds of dexterity; and they alone got place in his ship, for he had a good choice of house-troops from the best men of every district. King Harald had a great army, many large ships, and many men of might followed him. Hornklofe, in his poem called "Glymdrapa," tells of this; and also that King Harald had a battle with the people of Orkadal, at Opdal forest, before he went upon this expedition.

"O'er the broad heath the bowstrings twang,  
While high in air the arrows sang;  
The iron shower drives to flight  
The foeman from the bloody fight.  
The warder of great Odin's shrine,  
The fair-haired son of Odin's line,  
Raises the voice which gives the cheer,  
First in the track of wolf or bear.  
His master voice drives them along  
To Hel—a destined, trembling throng;  
And Nokve's ship, with glancing sides,  
Must fly to the wild ocean's tides,—  
Must fly before the king who leads  
Norse axe-men on their ocean steeds."

#### CHAPTER X.—*Battle at Solskel.*

King Harald moved out with his army from Thrond-

\* Rausn is explained by Schöning to have been that part of the vessel where the rise begins to form the bow—the forecastle-deck.—L.

† Berserk. See note, chapter 6, "Ynglinga Saga."

hjem, and went southwards to More.\* Hunthiof was the name of the king who ruled over the district of More. Solve Klofe was the name of his son, and both were great warriors. King Nokve, who ruled over Raumsdal,† was the brother of Solve's mother. Those chiefs gathered a great force when they heard of King Harald, and came against him. They met at Solskel,‡ and there was a great battle, which was gained by King Harald [A.D. 867]. Hornklofe tells of this battle:—

“ Thus did the hero known to fame,  
The leader of the shields, whose name  
Strikes every heart with dire dismay,  
Launch forth his war-ships to the fray.  
Two kings he fought ; but little strife  
Was needed to cut short their life.  
A clang of arms by the sea-shore,—  
And the shields' sound was heard no more.”

The two kings were slain, but Solve escaped by flight ; and King Harald laid both districts under his power. He stayed here long in summer to establish law and order for the country people, and set men to rule them, and keep them faithful to him ; and in autumn he prepared to return northwards to Throndhjem. Ragnvald Earl of More, a son of Eystein Glumra, had the summer before become one of Harald's men ; and the king set him as chief over these two districts, North More and Raumsdal ;

\* Mæri appears derived from the old northern word *mar*, the sea ; the same as the Latin *mare*, and retained by us in *moor* or *morass*. It is applied to a flat bordering on the sea ; and possibly our *Murrayshire* may have a common root with the two districts of Norway called *South* and *North More*.—L.

† Raumsdal is the present Romsdal.—L.

‡ Solskel is an island in the parish of *Ædo*, in *North More*.—L.

strengthened him both with men of might and bondes, and gave him the help of ships to defend the coast against enemies. He was called Ragnvald the Mighty, or the Wise; and people say both names suited well. King Harald came back to Thronthjem about winter.

CHAPTER XI.—*Fall of the Kings Arnvid and Audbiorn.*

The following spring [A.D. 868], King Harald raised a great force in Thronthjem, and gave out that he would proceed to South More. Solve Klofe had passed the winter in his ships of war, plundering in North More, and had killed many of King Harald's men; pillaging some places, burning others, and making great ravage: but sometimes he had been, during the winter, with his friend King Arnvid in South More. Now when he heard that King Harald was come with ships and a great army, he gathered people, and was strong in men-at-arms; for many thought they had to take vengeance of King Harald. Solve Klofe went southwards to the Fiord, which King Audbiorn ruled over, to ask him to help, and join his force to King Arnvid's and his own. "For," said he, "it is now clear that we all have but one course to take; and that is to rise, all as one man, against King Harald, for we have strength enough, and fate must decide the victory: for as to the other condition of becoming his servants, that is no condition for us, who are not less noble than Harald. My father thought it better to fall in battle for his kingdom,



than to go willingly into King Harald's service, or not to abide the chance of weapons like the Naumudal kings." King Solve's speech was such that King Audbiorn promised his help, and gathered a great force together, and went with it to King Arnvid, and they had a great army. Now, they got news that King Harald was come from the north, and they met within Solskel. And it was the custom to lash the ships together, stem to stem; so it was done now. King Harald laid his ship against King Arnvid's, and there was the sharpest fight, and many men fell on both sides. At last King Harald was raging with anger, and went forward to the fore-deck, and slew so dreadfully that all the forecastle men of Arnvid's ship were driven aft of the mast, and some fell. Thereupon Harald boarded the ship, and King Arnvid's men tried to save themselves by flight, and he himself was slain in his ship. King Audbiorn also fell; but Solve fled. So says Hornklofe:—

"Against the hero's shield in vain  
The arrow-storm fierce pours its rain.  
The king stands on the blood-stained deck,  
Trampling on many a stout foe's neck;  
And high above the dinning stound'  
Of helm and axe, and ringing sound  
Of blade and shield, and raven's cry,  
Is heard his shout of 'Victory!'"

Of King Harald's men, fell his earls Asgaut and Asbiorn, together with his brothers-in-law Griotgard and Herlaug, the sons of Earl Hakon of Lade. Solve became afterwards a great sea-king, and often did great damage in King Harald's dominions.

CHAPTER XII.—*King Vemund Burnt to Death.*

After this battle [A.D. 868] King Harald subdued South More ; but Vemund, King Audbiorn's brother, still had the Firda-district. It was now late in harvest, and King Harald's men gave him the counsel not to proceed southwards round Stad.\* Then King Harald set Earl Ragnvald over South and North More and also Raumsdal, and he had many people about him. King Harald returned to Thronthjem [A.D. 869]. The same winter Ragnvald went over Eid, and southwards to the Firda district. There he heard news of King Vemund, and came by night to a place called Naustdal, where King Vemund was living in guest-quarters. Earl Ragnvald surrounded the house in which they were quartered, and burnt the king in it, together with ninety men. Then came Berdlukare to Earl Ragnvald with a completely armed long-ship, and they both returned to More. The earl took all the ships Vemund had, and all the goods he could get hold of. Berdlukare † proceeded north to Thronthjem to King Harald, and became his man ; and a dreadful berserk he was.

\* Stad is often mentioned in the sagas, being the most westerly part of the mainland of Norway ; and vessels coasting along from the north or south had to steer a new course along the coast after passing Stad. It is now called Statland.—L.

† Kare of Berdla, called Berdlukare, lived in the Firda district. His sons Eyvind and the skald Alver were in the king's hird and enjoyed his favour. Berdlakare was related to Kveldulf, who, with his sons Thorulf and Grim, is mentioned in the *Egla*.

CHAPTER XIII.—*Death of Earl Hakon and of Earl  
Atle the Mjove.\**

The following spring [869] King Harald went southwards with his fleet along the coast, and subdued the Firda-district. Then he sailed eastward along the land until he came to Viken;† but he left Earl Hakon Griotgardson behind, and set him over the Firda-district. Earl Hakon sent word to Earl Atle the Mjove that he should leave Sogn district, and be earl over Gaular district, as he had been before, alleging that King Harald had given Sogn district to him. Earl Atle sent word that he would keep both Sogn district and Gaular district, until he met King Harald. The two earls quarrelled about this so long, that both gathered troops. They met at Fialar, in Stavanger fiord, and had a great battle, in which Earl Hakon fell, and Earl Atle got a mortal wound, and his men carried him to the island of Atley,‡ where he died. So says Eyvind Skaldaspiller:—

“He who stood a rooted oak,  
Unshaken by the swordsman’s stroke,  
Amidst the whiz of arrows slain,  
Has fallen upon Fialar’s plain.

---

\* *Mjove* means the Slender.

† The statements in this chapter that Harald sailed eastward, and that he had given Hakon the Sogne district, are in conflict with the *Egla* and the *Flateyar-bok*, where we read that Harald went to Thronthjem this year, and that Earl Hroald received Firda-fylke after it had been conquered. Snorre is probably in error.

‡ Atle isle in Fialar, now included in Söndfiord, has probably got its name from Atle. Three standing stones at Velnes church, supposed to have been erected to his memory, still remain.—L.

There, by the ocean's rocky shore,  
The waves are stained with the red gore  
Of stout Earl Hakon Griotgard's son,  
And of brave warriors many a one."

CHAPTER XIV.—*Of King Harald and the Swedish King Eirik.*

King Harald came with his fleet eastward to Viken, and landed at Tunsberg, which was then a trading town. He had then been four years in Throndhjem, and in all that time had not been in Viken.\* Here he heard the news that Eirik Eymundson, king of Sweden, had laid under him Vermaland, and was taking scat or land-tax from all the forest settlers; and also that he called the whole country north to Svinasund, and west along the sea, West Gautland; and which altogether he reckoned to his kingdom, and took land-tax from it. Over this country he had set an earl, by name Hrane Gauzke, who had the earldom between Svinasund and the Gaut river, and was a mighty earl. And it was told to King Harald that the Swedish king said he would not rest until he had as great a kingdom in Viken as Sigurd Ring, or his son Ragnar Lodbrok, had possessed; and that was Raumarike and Vestfold, all the way to the isle Grenmar, and also Vingulmark, and all that lay south of it. In these districts many chiefs, and many other people, had given obedience to the Swedish king. King Harald was very angry at this, and summoned the bondes to a

\* In reference to the chronology, the reader is referred to the note in chapter 13, and to the *Egla*, chapters 3-19.

Thing at Folden, where he laid an accusation \* against them for treason towards him. Some bondes defended themselves from the accusation, some paid fines, some were punished. He went thus through the whole district during the summer, and in harvest he did the same in Raumarike, and laid the two districts under his power. Towards winter he heard that Eirik king of Sweden was, with his court, going about in Vermaland in guest-quarters.

CHAPTER XV.—*King Harald at a Feast of the Peasant Ake, and the Murder of Ake.*

King Harald takes his way across the Eid forest eastward, and comes out in Vermaland, where he also orders feasts to be prepared for himself. There was a man, by name Ake, who was the greatest of the bondes of Vermaland, very rich, and at that time very aged. He sent men to King Harald, and invited him to a feast, and the king promised to come on the day appointed. Ake invited also King Eirik to a feast, and appointed the same day. Ake had a great feasting hall, but it was old; and he made a new hall, not less than the old one, and had it ornamented in the most splendid way. The new hall he had hung with new hangings, but the old had only its old ornaments. Now when the kings came to the feast, King Eirik with his court was taken into the old hall; but Harald with his followers into the new. The

\* A reference to a Thing, and an accusation before it, appears to have been a necessary mode of proceeding, even to authorise the king to punish for treason the udal landholders.—L.

same difference was in all the table furniture, and King Eirik and his men had the old-fashioned vessels and horns, but all gilded and splendid; while King Harald and his men had entirely new-vessels and horns adorned with gold, all with carved figures, and shining like glass: and both companies had the best of liquor. Ake the bonde had formerly been King Halfdan the Black's man. Now when daylight came, and the feast was quite ended, and the kings made themselves ready for their journey, and the horses were saddled, came Ake before King Harald, leading in his hand his son Ubbe, a boy of twelve years of age, and said, "If the goodwill I have shown to thee, sire, in my feast, be worth thy friendship, show it hereafter to my son. I give him to thee now for thy service." The king thanked him with many agreeable words for his friendly entertainment, and promised him his full friendship in return. Then Ake brought out great presents, which he gave to the king, and they gave each other thereafter the parting kiss. Ake went next to the Swedish king, who was dressed and ready for the road, but not in the best humour. Ake gave to him also good and valuable gifts; but the king answered only with few words, and mounted his horse. Ake followed the king on the road, and talked with him. The road led through a wood which was near to the house; and when Ake came to the wood, the king said to him, "How was it that thou madest such a difference between me and King Harald as to give him the best of everything, although thou knowest thou art my man?" "I think," answered

Ake, "that there failed in it nothing, king, either to you or to your attendants, in friendly entertainment at this feast. But that all the utensils for your drinking were old, was because you are now old; but King Harald is in the bloom of youth, and therefore I gave him the new things. And as to my being thy man, thou art just as much my man." On this the king out with his sword, and gave Ake his death-wound. King Harald was ready now also to mount his horse, and desired that Ake should be called. The people went to seek him; and some ran up the road that King Eirik had taken, and found Ake there dead. They came back, and told the news to King Harald, and he bids his men to be up, and avenge Ake the bonde. And away rode he and his men the way King Eirik had taken, until they came in sight of each other. Each for himself rode as hard as he could, until Eirik came into the wood which divides Gautland and Vermaland. There King Harald wheels about, and returns to Vermaland, and lays the country under him, and kills King Eirik's men wheresoever he can find them. In winter King Harald returned to Raumarike, and dwelt there a while.

CHAPTER XVI.—*King Harald's Journey to Tunsberg.*

King Harald went out in winter to his ships at Tunsberg, rigged them, and sailed away eastward over the fiord, and subjected all Vingulmark to his dominion. All winter he was out with his ships,

and marauded in Ranrike ; \* so says Thorbiorn Hornklofe :—

“The Norseman’s king is on the sea,  
 Tho’ bitter wintry cold it be,—  
 On the wild waves his Yule keeps he.  
 When our brisk king can get his way,  
 He’ll no more by the fireside stay  
 Than the young sun : he makes us play  
 The game of the bright sun-god † Frey.  
 But the soft Swede loves well the fire,  
 The well-stuffed couch, the downy glove,  
 And from the hearth-seat will not move.”

The Gautlanders gathered people together all over the country.

#### CHAPTER XVII.—*The Battle in Gautland.*

In spring, when the ice was breaking up, they drove stakes into the Gaut river to hinder King Harald with his ships from coming to the land. But King Harald laid his ships alongside the stakes, and plundered the country, and burnt all around ; so says Hornklofe :—

“The king, who finds a dainty feast  
 For battle-bird and prowling beast,  
 Has won in war the southern land  
 That lies along the ocean’s strand.  
 The leader of the helmets, he  
 Who leads his ships o’er the dark sea,  
 Harald, whose high-rigged masts appear  
 Like antlered fronts of the wild deer,  
 Has laid his ships close alongside  
 Of the foe’s piles with daring pride.”

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\* Ranrike was the present Bahuus province, between the Gota and Glommen river-mouths.—L.

† In northern mythology Frey, the god of the sun, is supposed to have been born at the winter solstice ; and the return of the lengthening day was celebrated by a feast called Yule, which coinciding with Christmas, was transferred to the Christian festival.—L.



Afterwards the Gautlanders came down to the strand with a great army, and gave battle to King Harald, and great was the fall of men. But it was King Harald who gained the day. Thus says Hornklofe :—

“ Whistles the battle-axe in its swing,  
O'er head the whizzing javelins sing,  
Helmet and shield and hauberk ring ;  
The air-song of the lance is loud,  
The arrows pipe in darkening cloud ;  
Through helm and mail the foemen feel  
The blue edge of our king's good steel.  
Who can withstand our gallant king ?  
The Gautland men their flight must wing.”

#### CHAPTER XVIII.—*Hrane the Gautlander's Death.*

King Harald went far and wide through Gautland, and many were the battles he fought there on both sides of the river, and in general he was victorious. In one of these battles fell Hrane Gauzke ; and then the king took his whole land north of the river and west of the Vener, and also Vermaland. And after he turned back therefrom, he set Guthorm as chief to defend the country, and left a great force with him. King Harald himself went first to the Uplands, where he remained a while, and then proceeded northwards over the Dovrefield to Throndhjem, where he dwelt for a long time. Harald began to have children. By Asa he had four sons. The eldest was Guthorm.\* Halfdan the Black and Halfdan the White were twins. Sigfrod was the fourth. They were all brought up in Throndhjem with all honour.

\* According to the *Flatey-bok*, Guthorm was the son of Gyda.

CHAPTER XIX.—*Battle in Hafersfiord.*

News came in from the south land that the people of Hordaland and Rogaland, Agder and Thelemark, were gathering, and bringing together ships and weapons, and a great body of men. The leaders of this were Eirik king of Hordaland; Sulke king of Rogaland, and his brother Earl Sote; Kiotve the Rich, king of Agder, and his son Thor Haklang; and from Thelemark two brothers, Hroald Hryg and Had the Hard. Now when Harald got certain news of this, he assembled his forces, set his ships on the water, made himself ready with his men, and set out southwards along the coast, gathering many people from every district. King Eirik heard of this when he came south of Stad; and having assembled all the men he could expect, he proceeded southwards to meet the force which he knew was coming to his help from the east. The whole met together north of Jadar,\* and went into Hafersfiord, where King Harald was waiting with his forces. A great battle began, which was both hard and long; but at last King Harald gained the day. There King Eirik fell, and King Sulke, with his brother Earl Sote. Thor Haklang, who was a great berserk, had laid his ship against King Harald's, and there was above all measure a desperate attack, until Thor Haklang fell, and his whole ship was cleared of men. Then King Kiotve fled to a little isle outside, on which there was a good place of strength. Thereafter all his

\* The present Jaderen, near Stavanger.

men fled, some to their ships, some up to the land ; and the latter ran southwards over the country of Jadar. So says Hornklofe, viz. :—

“Has the news reached you?—have you heard  
Of the great fight at Hafersfiord, \*  
Between our noble king brave Harald  
And King Kiotve rich in gold ?  
The foemen came from out the East,  
Keen for the fray as for a feast.  
A gallant sight it was to see  
Their fleet sweep o’er the dark-blue sea ;  
Each war-ship, with its threatening throat  
Of dragon fierce or ravenous brute †  
Grim gaping from the prow ; its wales  
Glittering with burnished shields, ‡ like scales ;  
Its crew of udal men of war,  
Whose snow-white targets shone from far ;  
And many a mailed spearman stout  
From the West countries round about,  
English and Scotch, a foreign host,  
And swordsmen from the far French coast, §  
And as the foemen’s ships drew near,  
The dreadful din you well might hear ;  
Savage berserks roaring mad,  
And champions fierce in wolf-skins clad, ||  
Howling like wolves ; and clanking jar  
Of many a mail-clad man of war.  
Thus the foe came ; but our brave king  
Taught them to fly as fast again.  
For when he saw their force come o’er,  
He launched his war-ships from the shore ;  
On the deep sea he launched his fleet,  
And boldly rowed the foe to meet.

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\* Hafersfiödr, now Hafsfiord, north of Jaderen district, near Stavanger.—L.

† The war-ships were called dragons, from being decorated with the head of a dragon, serpent, or other wild animal ; and the word “draco” was adopted in the Latin of the Middle Ages to denote a ship of war of the larger class. The snekke was the cutter or smaller war-ship.—L.

‡ The shields were hung over the side-rails of the ships.—L.

§ It is curious to find that English, Scotch, and French men-at-arms, from the West countries, were in Kiotve’s army.—L.

|| The wolf-skin pelts were nearly as good as armour against the sword.—L.

Fierce was the shock, and loud the clang  
 Of shields, until the fierce Haklang,  
 The foeman's famous berserk, fell.  
 Then from our men burst forth the yell  
 Of victory ; and the King of Gold  
 Could not withstand our Harald bold,  
 But fled before his flaky locks  
 For shelter to the island rocks.  
 All in the bottom of the ships  
 The wounded lay, in ghastly heaps ;  
 Backs up and faces down they lay,  
 Under the row-seats stowed away ;  
 And many a warrior's shield, I ween,  
 Might on the warrior's back be seen,  
 To shield him as he fled amain  
 From the fierce stone-storm's pelting rain.  
 The mountain-folk, as I've heard say,  
 Ne'er stopped as they ran from the fray,  
 Till they had crossed the Jadar sea,  
 And reached their homes—so keen each soul  
 To drown his fright in the mead bowl."

CHAPTER XX.—*King Harald the Supreme Sovereign in  
 Norway. Of the Settlement of Distant Lands.*

After this battle King Harald met no opposition in Norway, for all his opponents and greatest enemies were cut off. But some, and they were a great multitude, fled out of the country, and thereby great districts were peopled. Jemtaland and Helsingjaland were peopled then, although some Norwegians had already set up their habitation there. In the discontent that King Harald seized on the lands of Norway,\* the out-countries of Iceland and the Farey† Isles were discovered and peopled. The Northmen had also a

\* This taking the land appears to have been an attempt to introduce the feudal tenures and services.—L.

† Icelandic, *Færeyar*; literally sheep-isles.

great resort to Shetland,\* and many men left Norway, flying the country on account of King Harald, and went on viking cruises into the West sea. In winter they were in the Orkney Islands and Hebrides;† but marauded in summer in Norway, and did great damage. Many, however, were the mighty men who took service under King Harald, and became his men, and dwelt in the land with him.

CHAPTER XXI.—*King Harald's Marriage and his Children.*

When King Harald had now become sole king over all Norway, he remembered what that proud girl had said to him; so he sent men to her, and had her brought to him, and took her to his bed. And these were their children: Alof—she was the eldest; then was their son Hrorek; then Sigtryg, Frode, and Thorgils. King Harald had many wives‡ and many children. Among them he had one wife, who was called Ragnhild the Mighty, a daughter of King Eirik, from Jutland; and by her he had a son, Eirik Blood-axe. He was also married to Svanhild, a daughter of Earl Eystein; and their sons were Olaf

\* Called Hjaltland in the Icelandic.

† Called in the Icelandic Sudreyar.

‡ Polygamy—possibly brought with them from their original seats in Asia—appears to have been a privilege of the royal race, among the Northmen, down to the thirteenth century. The kings had concubines as well as a plurality of wives; and the children appear to have been equally udal-born to the kingdom, whether born in marriage or not. It does not appear from the sagas what forms or ceremonies constituted a marriage before the introduction of Christianity. A marriage feast or wedding is mentioned, and one of the wives appears to have been the *drottning* or queen; but we are not told of any religious ceremony besides the feast.—L.

Geirstade-Alf, Biorn and Ragnar Rykkil. Lastly, King Harald married Ashild, a daughter of Hring Dagson, up in Ringerike; and their children were, Dag, Hring, Gudrod Skiria, and Ingigerd. It is told that King Harald put away nine wives when he married Ragnhild the Mighty. So says Hornklofe:—

“Harald, of noblest race the head,  
A Danish wife took to his bed;  
And out of doors nine wives he thrust,—  
The mothers of the princes first,  
Who in Holmryger hold command,  
And those who rule in Hordaland.  
And then he packed from out the place  
The children born of Holge’s race.”

King Harald’s children were all fostered and brought up by their relations on the mother’s side. Guthorm the Duke had poured water over King Harald’s eldest son,\* and had given him his own name. He set the child upon his knee,† and was

\* See note, page 102. According to ancient Scandinavian laws, the right of inheritance on the part of the children depended on their having received baptism. Jacob Grimm has shown in his “*Deutsche Rechts-Alterthümer*” (page 457, edition of 1828) that in the old Norse heathendom the father was permitted to expose his own child only before it had been sprinkled with water. A few years ago the distinguished scholar, Dr. Konrad Maurer, of Munich, took pains to collect in a pamphlet all the references to infant baptism in heathen times. He there shows how extensively baptism was practised among the heathen Teutons, and what its real significance was. He also points out its connection with similar ancient rites among the Greeks and Romans. In his scholarly work, Dr. Maurer has sifted every passage bearing on this subject not only in the old Icelandic and Norwegian literary monuments, but also in the historical documents of the Swedes, Danes, South Germans, and Anglo-Saxons. Dr. Maurer shows that this heathen baptism was a naming ceremony, that a peculiar bond was established between the person baptizing and the person baptized, and also between the child and the witnesses present, a relation corresponding to that of god-father and god-mother among Christians, and that it made the child an heir.

† This appears to have been a generally used symbol of adoption of a child.—L.

his foster-father, and took him with himself eastward to Viken, and there he was brought up in the house of Guthorm. Guthorm ruled the whole land in Viken, and the Uplands, when King Harald was absent.

CHAPTER XXII.—*King Harald's Voyage to the West.*

King Harald heard that the vikings, who were in the West sea in winter, plundered far and wide in the middle part of Norway; and therefore every summer he made an expedition to search the isles and out-skerries \* on the coast. Wheresoever the vikings heard of him they all took to flight, and most of them out into the open ocean. At last the king grew weary of this work, and therefore one summer he sailed with his fleet right out into the West sea. First he came to Hjaltland (Shetland), and he slew all the vikings who could not save themselves by flight. Then King Harald sailed southwards, to the Orkney Islands, and cleared them all of vikings. Thereafter he proceeded to the Sudreys (Hebrides), plundered there, and slew many vikings who formerly had had men-at-arms under them. Many a battle was fought, and King Harald was always victorious. He then plundered far and wide in Scotland itself, and had a battle there. When he was come westward as far as the Isle of Man, the report of his exploits on the land had gone before him; for all the inhabitants had fled over to Scotland, and the island was left entirely bare both

\* Skerries are the uninhabited dry or half-tide rocks of a coast.—L.

of people and goods, so that King Harald and his men made no booty when they landed. So says Hornklofe :—

“The wise, the noble king, great Harald,  
Whose hand so freely scatters gold,  
Led many a northern shield to war  
Against the town upon the shore.  
The wolves soon gathered on the sand  
Of that sea-shore ; for Harald’s hand  
The Scottish army drove away,  
And on the coast left wolves a prey.”

In this war fell Ivar, a son of Ragnvald, Earl of More ; and King Harald gave Ragnvald, as a compensation for the loss, the Orkney and Shetland isles, when he sailed from the West ; but Ragnvald immediately gave both these countries to his brother Sigurd, who remained behind them ; and King Harald, before sailing eastward, gave Sigurd the earldom of them. Thorstein the Red, a son of Olaf the White and of Aud the Wealthy, entered into partnership with him ; and after plundering in Scotland, they subdued Caithness and Sutherland, as far as Ekkjalsbakke.\* Earl Sigurd killed Melbridge Tooth, a Scotch earl, and hung his head to his stirrup-leather ; but the calf of his leg was scratched by the teeth, which were sticking out from the head, and the wound caused inflammation in his leg, of which the earl died, and he was laid in a mound at Ekkjalsbakke. His son Guthorm ruled over these countries

\* Ekkjalsbakke, the Ekkial, is now the Oickel, a river falling into the Frith of Dornoch ; and the banks or braes on its borders are the Ekkjalsbakke of the saga—not the Ochil hills, as some have imagined ; and the burial mound may be still remaining possibly.—L.



for about a year thereafter, and died without children. Many vikings, both Danes and Northmen, set themselves down then in those countries.

CHAPTER XXIII.—*King Harald has his Hair Clipped.*

After King Harald had subdued the whole land, he was one day at a feast in More, given by Earl Ragnvald. Then King Harald went into a bath, and had his hair dressed. Earl Ragnvald now cut his hair, which had been uncut and uncombed for ten years; and therefore the king had been called Lufa (*i.e.*, with rough matted hair). But then Earl Ragnvald gave him the distinguishing name—Harald Harfager (*i.e.*, fair hair); and all who saw him agreed that there was the greatest truth in that surname, for he had the most beautiful and abundant head of hair.

CHAPTER XXIV.—*Rolf Ganger is driven into Banishment.*

Earl Ragnvald was King Harald's dearest friend, and the king had the greatest regard for him. He was married to Hild, a daughter of Rolf Nefia, and their sons were Rolf and Thorer. Earl Ragnvald had also three sons by concubines,—the one called Hallad, the second Einar, the third Hrollaug; and all three were grown men when their brothers born in marriage were still children. Rolf became a great viking, and was of so stout a growth that no horse could carry him, and wheresoever he went he must go on foot;

and therefore he was called Gange-Rolf.\* He plundered much in the East sea.† One summer, as he was coming from the eastward on a viking's expedition to the coast of Viken, he landed there and made a cattle foray.‡ As King Harald happened, just at that time, to be in Viken, he heard of it, and was in a great rage; for he had forbid, by the greatest punishment, the plundering within the bounds of the country. The king assembled a Thing, and had Rolf declared an outlaw over all Norway. When Rolf's mother, Hild, heard of it she hastened to the king, and entreated peace for Rolf; but the king was so enraged that her entreaty was of no avail. Then Hild spake these lines:—

“Think'st thou, King Harald, in thy anger,  
To drive away my brave Rolf Ganger,  
Like a mad wolf, from out the land?  
Why, Harald, raise thy mighty hand?  
Why banish Nefia's gallant name-son,  
The brother of brave udal-men?  
Why is thy cruelty so fell?  
Bethink thee, monarch, it is ill  
With such a wolf at wolf to play,  
Who, driven to the wild woods away,  
May make the king's best deer his prey.”

Gange-Rolf went afterwards over sea to the West to the Hebrides, or Sudreys;§ and at last farther

\* Gange-Rolf, Rolf Ganger, Rolf the Walker, was the conqueror of Normandy. He appears to have had among his ancestors a Rolf Ganger; so that the popular story of his great obesity, which seems scarcely consistent with his great military activity, may not be literally true.—L.

† Austrvegr, the lands on the south side of the Baltic.—L.

‡ A strandhögg, or foray for cattle to be slaughtered on the strand for his ships.—L.

§ Sudreyar,—of which we still retain the name Sodor, applied to the bishopric of Sodor and man,—was the southern division of the Hebrides, or Hebudea.—L.

west to Valland,\* where he plundered and subdued for himself a great earldom, which he peopled with Northmen, from which that land is called Normandy. Gange-Rolf's son was William, father to Richard, and grandfather to another Richard, who was the father of Robert Longspear, and grandfather of William the Bastard, from whom all the following English kings are descended. From Gange-Rolf also are descended the earls in Normandy. Queen Ragnhild the Mighty lived three years after she came to Norway; and, after her death, her son and King Harald's was taken to Thorer Hroaldson, and Eirik was fostered by him.†

CHAPTER XXV.—*Of the Fin Svase and King Harald.*

King Harald, one winter, went about in guest-quarters in the Uplands, and had ordered a Christmas feast to be prepared for him at the farm Thoptar.‡ On Christmas eve came Svase to the door, just as the king went to table, and sent a message to the king to ask if he would go out with him. The king was angry at such a message, and the man who had brought it in took out with him a reply of the king's displeasure. But Svase, notwithstanding, desired that his message should be delivered a second time;

\* Valland was the name applied to all the west coast of France, but more particularly to Bretagne, as being inhabited by the Valer or inhabitants of Wales and Cornwales (Cornwall), expelled by the Saxons from Great Britain in the last half of the fifth century. The adjective Valskr (Welsh) was used to denote what belonged to this Valland.—L.

† Gange-Rolf was baptized in 912, and died in 931. He probably left Norway about the year 890.

‡ Now Tofte, near the head of Gudbrandsdal.—L.

adding to it, that he was the Fin whose hut the king had promised to visit, and which stood on the other side of the ridge. Now the king went out, and promised to follow him, and went over the ridge to his hut, although some of his men dissuaded him. There stood Snowfrid, the daughter of Svase, a most beautiful girl; and she filled a cup of mead for the king. But he took hold both of the cup and of her hand. Immediately it was as if a hot fire went through his body; and he wanted that very night to take her to his bed. But Svase said that should not be unless by main force, if he did not first make her his lawful wife. Now King Harald made Snowfrid his lawful wife, and loved her so passionately that he forgot his kingdom, and all that belonged to his high dignity. They had four sons: the one was Sigurd Hrise; the others Halfdan Haleg, Gudrod Liome, and Rognvald Rettilbeine. Thereafter Snowfrid died; but her corpse never changed, but was as fresh and red as when she lived. The king sat always beside her, and thought she would come to life again. And so it went on for three years that he was sorrowing over her death, and the people over his delusion.\* At last Thorleif the Wise succeeded, by his prudence, in curing him of his delusion by accosting him thus:—"It is nowise wonderful, king, that thou grieveest over so beautiful and noble a wife, and bestowest costly coverlets and beds of down on her corpse, as she desired; but these honours fall short of what is due, as she

\* There is a similar story about Charlemagne.

still lies in the same clothes. It would be more suitable to raise her, and change her dress." As soon as the body was raised in the bed all sorts of corruption and foul smells came from it, and it was necessary in all haste to gather a pile of wood and burn it; but before this could be done the body turned blue, and worms, toads, newts, paddocks, and all sorts of ugly reptiles came out of it, and it sank into ashes. Now the king came to his understanding again, threw the madness out of his mind, and after that day ruled his kingdom as before. He was strengthened and made joyful by his subjects, and his subjects by him, and the country by both.

CHAPTER XXVI.—*Of Thiodolf of Hvin, the Skald.*

After King Harald had experienced the cunning of the Fin woman, he was so angry that he drove from him the sons he had with her, and would not suffer them before his eyes. But one of them, Gudrod Liome, went to his foster-father Thiodolf of Hvin, and asked him to go to the king, who was then in the Uplands; for Thiodolf was a great friend of the king. And so they went, and came to the king's house late in the evening, and sat down together unnoticed near the door. The king walked up and down the floor casting his eye along the benches; for he had a feast in the house, and the mead was just mixed. The king then murmured out these lines:—

"Tell me, ye aged grey-haired heroes,  
Who have come here to seek repose,

Wherefore must I so many keep  
Of such a set, who, one and all,  
Right dearly love their souls to steep,  
From morn till night, in the mead-bowl?"

Then Thiodolf replies:—

"A certain wealthy chief, I think,  
Would gladly have had more to drink  
With him, upon one bloody day,  
When crowns were cracked in our sword-play."

Thiodolf then took off his hat, and the king recognised him, and gave him a friendly reception. Thiodolf then begged the king not to cast off his sons; "for they would with great pleasure have taken a better family descent upon the mother's side, if the king had given it to them." The king assented, and told him to take Gudrod with him as formerly; and he sent Halfdan and Sigurd to Ringerike, and Ragnvald to Hadeland, and all was done as the king ordered. They grew up to be very clever men, very expert in all exercises. In these times King Harald sat in peace in the land, and the land enjoyed quietness and good crops.

CHAPTER XXVII.—*Of Earl Torf-Einar's obtaining Orkney.*

When Earl Ragnvald in More heard of the death of his brother Earl Sigurd, and that the vikings were in possession of the country, he sent his son Hallad westward, who took the title of earl to begin with, and had many men-at-arms with him. When he arrived at the Orkney Islands, he established himself in the country; but both in harvest, winter, and spring, the

vikings cruised about the isles, plundering the headlands, and committing depredations on the coast. Then Earl Hallad grew tired of the business, resigned his earldom, took up again his rights as an allodial owner,\* and afterwards returned eastward into Norway. When Earl Ragnvald heard of this he was ill pleased with Hallad, and said his sons were very unlike their ancestors. Then said Einar, "I have enjoyed but little honour among you, and have little affection here to lose: now if you will give me force enough, I will go west to the islands, and promise you what at any rate will please you—that you shall never see me again." Earl Ragnvald replied, that he would be glad if he never came back; "For there is little hope," said he, "that thou wilt ever be an honour to thy friends, as all thy kin on thy mother's side are born slaves." Earl Ragnvald gave Einar a vessel completely equipped, and he sailed with it into the West sea in harvest. When he came to the Orkney Isles, two vikings, Thorer Treskeg and Kalf Skurfa, were in his way with two vessels. He attacked them instantly, gained the battle, and slew the two vikings. Then this was sung:—

"Then gave he Treskeg to the trolls,  
Torf-Einar slew Skurfa."

He was called Torf-Einar, because he cut peat for fuel, there being no firewood, as in Orkney there are

\* The Icelandic word in Snorre is *hauðsrett*, that is, the rights of a *hauðr*. This word is not derived from *halda* (to hold), but is identical with Anglo-Saxon *hæle*, German, *held* (a hero). As a law term it means the owner of allodial land, a kind of higher yeomen, like the Westmoreland statesman. It is identical in meaning with the modern Norwegian *Odelsbonde* (udal farmer). See Vigfusson, *s.v.*

no woods. He afterwards was earl over the islands, and was a mighty man. He was ugly, and blind of an eye, yet very sharp-sighted withal.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—*King Eirik Eymundson's Death.*

Duke Guthorm\* dwelt principally at Tunsberg, and governed the whole of Viken when the king was not there. He defended the land, which, at that time, was much plundered by the vikings. There were disturbances also up in Gautland as long as King Eirik Eymundson lived; but he died when King Harald Fairhair had been ten years king of all Norway.

CHAPTER XXIX.—*Guthorm's Death in Tunsberg.*

After Eirik, his son Biorn was king of Svithiod for fifty years. He was father of Eirik the Victorious, and of Olaf the father of Styrbiorn. Guthorm died on a bed of sickness at Tunsberg, and King Harald gave his son Guthorm the government of that part of his dominions, and made him chief of it.

CHAPTER XXX.—*Earl Ragnvald Burnt in his House.*

When King Harald was forty years of age many of his sons were well advanced, and indeed they all came early to strength and manhood. And now they began to take it ill that the king would not give

\* Duke Guthorm, Harald Harfager's uncle.—L.



them any part of the kingdom, but put earls into every district ; for they thought earls were of inferior birth to them. Then Halfdan Haleg and Gudrod Liome set off one spring with a great force, and came suddenly upon Earl Ragnvald, earl of More, and surrounded the house in which he was, and burnt him and sixty men in it. Thereafter Halfdan took three long-ships, and fitted them out, and sailed into the West sea ; but Gudrod set himself down in the land which Ragnvald formerly had. Now when King Harald heard this he set out with a great force against Gudrod, who had no other way left but to surrender, and he was sent to Agder. King Harald then set Earl Ragnvald's son Thoror over More, and gave him his daughter Alof, called Arbot, in marriage. Earl Thoror, called the Silent, got the same territory his father Earl Ragnvald had possessed.

#### CHAPTER XXXI.—*Halfdan Haleg's Death:*

Halfdan Haleg came very unexpectedly to Orkney, and Earl Einar immediately fled ; but came back soon after, about harvest time, unnoticed by Halfdan. They met, and after a short battle Halfdan fled the same night. Einar and his men lay all night without tents, and when it was light in the morning they searched the whole island, and killed every man they could lay hold of. Then Einar said "What is that I see upon the isle of Rinanseý ?" Is it a man or a bird ? Sometimes it raises itself up, and sometimes

\* North Ronaldsay in the Orkneys.

lies down again." They went to it, and found it was Halfdan Haleg, and took him prisoner.

Earl Einar sang the following song the evening before he went into this battle :—

"Where is the spear of Hrollaug? \* where  
Is stout Rolf Ganger's bloody spear!  
I see them not; yet never fear,  
For Einar will not vengeance spare  
Against his father's murderers, though  
Hrollaug and Rolf are somewhat slow,  
And silent Thorer sits and dreams  
At home, beside the mead-bowl's streams."

Thereafter Earl Einar went up to Halfdan, and cut a spread eagle upon his back,† by striking his sword through his back into his belly, dividing his ribs from the back-bone down to his loins, and tearing out his lungs; and so Halfdan was killed. Einar then sang :—

"For Ragnvald's death my sword is red :  
Of vengeance it cannot be said  
That Einar's share is left unsped.  
So now, brave boys, let's raise a mound,—  
Heap stones and gravel on the ground  
O'er Halfdan's corpse : this is the way  
We Norsemen our scat duties pay."

Then Earl Einar took possession of the Orkney Isles as before. Now when these tidings came to Norway, Halfdan's brothers took it much to heart, and thought that his death demanded vengeance ;

\* Hrollaug, Rolf Ganger, Thorer the Silent, and Einar were all sons of that Earl Ragnvald whom Harald Harfager's sons, and among them Halfdan, had surprised and burnt in his house. They ought, according to the opinion of the times, to have taken vengeance as well as Einar on the murderers.—L.

† This kind of punishment was called *rista örn*—to cut an eagle.—L.

and many were of the same opinion. When Einar heard this, he sang :—

“ Many a stout udal-man, I know,  
Has cause to wish my head laid low ;  
And many an angry udal knife  
Would gladly drink of Einar’s life.  
But ere they lay Earl Einar low,—  
Ere this stout heart betrays its cause,  
Full many a heart will writhe, we know,  
In the wolf’s fangs, or eagle’s claws.”

CHAPTER XXXII.—*King Harald and Earl Einar  
Reconciled.*

King Harald now ordered a levy, and gathered a great force, with which he proceeded westward to Orkney ; and when Earl Einar heard that King Harald was come, he fled over to Caithness. He made the following verses on this occasion :—

“ Many a bearded man must roam,  
An exile from his house and home,  
For cow or horse ; but Halfdan’s gore  
Is red on Rinansey’s wild shore.  
A nobler deed—on Harald’s shield  
The arm of one who ne’er will yield  
Has left a scar. Let peasants dread  
The vengeance of the Norsemen’s head ;  
I reckon not of his wrath, but sing,  
‘ Do thy worst !—I defy thee, king ! ’ ”

Men and messages, however, passed between the king and the earl, and at last it came to a conference ; and when they met the earl submitted the case altogether to the king’s decision, and the king condemned the earl and the Orkney people to pay a fine of sixty marks of gold. As the bondes thought this was too heavy for them to pay, the earl offered

to pay the whole if they would surrender their udal lands to him.\* This they all agreed to do: the poor because they had but little pieces of land; the rich because they could redeem their udal rights again when they liked. Thus the earl paid the whole fine to the king, who returned in harvest to Norway. The earls for a long time afterwards possessed all the udal lands in Orkney, until Sigurd Hlodvison † gave back the udal rights.‡

CHAPTER XXXIII.—*Death of Guthorm. Death of Halfdan the White.*

While King Harald's son Guthorm had the defence of Viken, he sailed outside of the islands on the coast, and came in by one of the mouths of the Gaut river. When he lay there Solve Klofe came upon him, and immediately gave him battle, and Guthorm fell. Halfdan the White and Halfdan the Black went out on an expedition, and plundered in the East sea, and had a battle in Eistland,§ where Halfdan the White fell.

CHAPTER XXXIV.—*Marriage of Eirik, the Son of King Harald.*

Eirik, Harald's son, was fostered in the house of the herse Thorer, son of Hroald, in the Fiord district.

\* See the Saga of Olaf the Saint, chapter 99, where the story is told somewhat differently.

† He fell in the Brian battle, 1014, after a reign of about 30 years. He was one of the greatest of the Orkney jarls.

‡ There are still a few udal properties in Orkney, and many which are described in the feudal charters as having been udal lands of old.—L.

§ Eistland is Esthonia.—L.

He was the most beloved and honoured by King Harald of all his sons. When Eirik was twelve\* years old, King Harald gave him five long-ships, with which he went on an expedition,—first in the Baltic; then southwards to Denmark, Friesland,† and Saxonland; on which expedition he passed four years. He then sailed out into the West sea, and plundered in Scotland, Bretland,‡ Ireland, and Valland,§ and passed four years more in this way. Then he sailed north to Finmark,|| and all the way to Biarmaland,¶ where he had many a battle, and won many a victory. When he came back to Finmark, his men found a girl in a Lapland hut, whose equal for beauty they never had seen. She said her name was Gunhild, and that her father dwelt in Halogaland, and was called Ozur Tote. “I am here,” she said, “to learn Lapland-art, from two of the most knowing Laplanders in all Finmark, who are now out hunting. They both want me in marriage. They are so skilful that they can hunt out traces either upon the frozen or the thawed earth, like dogs; and

\* In the saga-age, young men became of age at twelve, and could then enter public life.

† Friesland appears to have been the name given to the whole coast from the Eyder in Slesvik to North Holland, and to have been called Saxonland (Saxland) or Friesland.—L.

‡ Bretland (Britton land) was that part of Britain inhabited by the ancient inhabitants. The sagas give the name of England only to the parts inhabited by the Anglo-Saxons. Wales, Cornwall, and the west coast of the island, are always called Bretland.—L.

§ Valland, the west coast of France, in which the inhabitants of Wales and Cornwall settled in the fifth century.—L.

|| Finmark is the country we call Lapland in the north of Norway and Sweden.—L.

¶ Biarmaland was the coast of the White Sea about the mouth of the Dwina, and now the Russian province of Archangel.—L.

they can run so swiftly on skees,\* that neither man nor beast can come near them in speed. They hit whatever they take aim at, and thus kill every man who comes near them. When they are angry the very earth turns away in terror, and whatever living thing they look upon then falls dead. Now ye must not come in their way; but I will hide you here in the hut, and ye must try to get them killed." They agreed to it, and she hid them, and then took a leather bag, in which they thought there were ashes which she took in her hand, and strewed both outside and inside of the hut. Shortly after the Laplanders came home, and asked who had been there; and she answered, "Nobody has been here." "That is wonderful," said they; "we followed the traces close to the hut, and can find none after that." Then they kindled a fire, and made ready their meat, and Gunhild prepared her bed. It had so happened that Gunhild had slept the three nights before, but the Laplanders had watched the one upon the other, being jealous of each other. "Now," she said to the Laplanders, "come here, and lie down one on each side of me." On which they were very glad to do so. She laid an arm round the neck of each, and they went to sleep directly. She roused them up; but they fell to sleep again instantly, and so soundly that she scarcely could waken them. She even raised them up in the bed, and still they slept. Thereupon she took two great seal-skin bags, and put their heads in them, and tied them fast under their arms;

\* A kind of long snow-shoes or snow-skates.

and then she gave a wink to the king's men. They run forth with their weapons, kill the two Lapplanders, and drag them out of the hut. That same night came such a dreadful thunder-storm that they could not stir. Next morning they came to the ship, taking Gunhild with them, and presented her to Eirik. Eirik and his followers then sailed southwards to Halogaland; and he sent word to Ozur Tote, the girl's father, to meet him. Eirik said he would take his daughter in marriage, to which Ozur Tote consented, and Erik took Gunhild, and went southwards with her [A.D. 922].

CHAPTER XXXV.—*Harald divides his Kingdom among his Sons.*

When King Harald was fifty years of age many of his sons were grown up, and some were dead. Many of them committed acts of great violence in the country, and were in discord among themselves. They drove some of the king's earls out of their properties, and even killed some of them. Then the king called together a numerous Thing\* in the south part of the country, and summoned to it all the people of the Uplands. At this Thing he gave to all his sons the title of king, and made a law that his descendants in the male line should each succeed to the kingly title and dignity; but his descendants by the female side only to that of earl. And he divided the country among them thus:—Vingulmark,

\* This must have been the Eidsiva-thing, at the present Eidsvold, where the present constitution of Norway was adopted, May 17, 1814.

Raumarike, Vestfold, and Thelemark, he bestowed on Olaf, Biorn, Sigtryg, Frode, and Thorgils. Hedemark and Gudbrandsdal he gave to Dag, Hring, and Ragnar. To Snowfrid's sons he gave Ringerike, Hadeland, Thoten, and the lands thereto belonging. His son Guthorm, as before mentioned, he had set over the country from Svinesund to the Glommen, and to defend the country eastwards. King Harald himself generally dwelt in the middle of the country, and Hrorek and Gudrod were generally with his court, and had great estates in Hordaland and in Sogn. King Eirik was also with his father King Harald; and the king loved and regarded him the most of all his sons, and gave him Halogaland and North More, and Raumsdal. North in Thronthjem he gave Halfdan the Black, Halfdan the White, and Sigrod land to rule over. In each of these districts he gave his sons the one half of his revenues, together with the right to sit on a high-seat,—a step higher than earls, but a step lower than his own high-seat. His king's seat each of his sons wanted for himself after his death, but he himself destined it for Eirik. The Thronthjem people wanted Halfdan the Black to succeed to it. The people of Viken, and the Uplands, wanted those under whom they lived. And thereupon new quarrels arose among the brothers; and because they thought their dominions too little, they drove about in piratical expeditions. In this way, as before related, Guthorm fell at the mouth of the Gaut river, slain by Solve Klofe; upon which Olaf took the kingdom he had



possessed. Halfdan the White fell in Eistland, Halfdan Haleg in Orkney. King Harald gave ships of war to Thorgils and Frode, with which they went westward on a viking cruise, and plundered in Scotland, Ireland, and Bretland. They were the first of the Northmen who took Dublin.\* It is said that Frode got poisoned drink there; but Thorgils was a long time king over Dublin, until he fell into a snare of the Irish, and was killed.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—*Death of Ragnvald Rettilbeine.*

Eirik Blood-axe expected to be head king over all his brothers and King Harald intended he should be so; and the father and son lived long together. Ragnvald Rettilbeine governed Hadeland, and allowed himself to be instructed in the arts of witchcraft, and became a great warlock. Now King Harald was a hater of all witchcraft. There was a warlock in Hordaland called Vitgeir; and when the king sent a message to him that he should give up his art of witchcraft, he replied in this verse:—

“The danger surely is not great  
From wizards born of mean estate,  
When Harald’s son in Hadeland,  
King Ragnvald, to the art lays hand.”

But when King Harald heard this, King Eirik Blood-axe went by his orders to the Uplands, and

\* Thorgils and Frode founded a Norman kingdom in Ireland about the year 840, or even earlier, according to the Irish annals, consequently they could not be Harald’s sons. Olaf the White came there in 852, and restored the Norse kingdom.—Vigfússon. Snorre calls Dublin *Dyflin*.

came to Hadeland, and burned his brother Ragnvald in a house, along with eighty other warlocks; which work was much praised.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—*Of Gudrod Liome.*

Gudrod Liome was in winter on a friendly visit to his foster-father Thiodolf in Hvin, and had a well-manned ship, with which he wanted to go north to Rogaland. It was blowing a heavy storm at the time; but Gudrod was bent on sailing, and would not consent to wait. Thiodolf sang thus:—

“Wait, Gudrod, till the storm is past,—  
Loose not thy long-ship while the blast  
Howls over-head so furiously,—  
Trust not thy long-ship to the sea,—  
Loose not thy long-ship from the shore :  
Hark to the ocean's angry roar !  
See how the very stones are tost,  
By raging waves high on the coast !  
Stay, Gudrod, till the tempest's o'er—  
Deep runs the sea off Jadar's shore.”

Gudrod set off in spite of what Thiodolf could say; and when they came off the Jadar the vessel sunk with them, and all on board were lost.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—*King Biorn the Merchant's Death.*

King Harald's son, Biorn, ruled over Vestfold at that time, and generally lived at Tunsberg, and went but little on war expeditions. Tunsberg at that time was much frequented by merchant vessels, both from Viken and the north country, and also from the

south, from Denmark, and Saxonland. King Biorn had also merchant ships on voyages to other lands, by which he procured for himself costly articles, and such things as he thought needful; and therefore his brothers called him the Seaman, and the Chapman (merchant). Biorn was a man of sense and understanding, and promised to become a good ruler. He made a good and suitable marriage, and had a son by his wife, who was named Gudrod. Eirik Blood-axe came from his Baltic cruise with ships of war, and a great force, and required his brother Biorn to deliver to him King Harald's share of the scat and incomes of Vestfold. But it had always been the custom before, that Biorn himself either delivered the money into the king's hands, or sent men of his own with it; and therefore he would continue with the old custom, and would not deliver the money. Eirik again wanted provisions, tents, and liquor. The brothers quarrelled about this; but Eirik got nothing, and left the town. Biorn went also out of the town towards evening up to Seaheim. In the night Eirik came back after Biorn, and came to Seaheim just as Biorn and his men were seated at table drinking. Eirik surrounded the house in which they were; but Biorn with his men went out and fought. Biorn, and many men with him, fell. Eirik, on the other hand, got a great booty, and proceeded northwards. But this work was taken very ill by the people of Viken, and Eirik was much disliked for it; and the report went that King Olaf would avenge his brother

Biorn, whenever opportunity offered. King Biorn lies in the Seaman's mound at Seaheim.\*

CHAPTER XXXIX.—*Of the Reconciliation of the Kings.*

King Eirik went in winter northwards to More, and was at a feast in Solve, within the point Agdanes;† and when Halfdan heard of it he set out with his men, and surrounded the house in which they were. Eirik slept in a room which stood detached by itself, and he escaped into the forest with five others; but Halfdan and his men burnt the main house, with all the people who were in it. With this news Eirik came to King Harald, who was very wroth at it, and assembled a great force against the Thronthjem people. When Halfdan the Black heard this he levied ships and men, so that he had a great force, and proceeded with it to Stad, within Thorsberg. King Harald lay with his men at Reinplain. Now people went between them, and among others a clever man called Guthorm Sindre, who was then in Halfdan's army, but had been formerly in the service of King Harald, and was a great friend of both. Guthorm was a great skald, and had once composed a song both about the father and the son, for which they had offered him a reward. But he would take nothing; but only asked that, some day or other, they should grant him any request

\* Seaheim, called afterwards Seim, is a farm in the present Sems parish in Jarlsberg, about two miles from the town of Tunsberg. The Seaman's mound is still to be seen.—L.

† Agdanes is the south point of land at the entrance of the Thronthjem fiord.—L.

he should make, which they promised to do. Now he presented himself to King Harald, — brought words of peace between them, and made the request to them both that they should be reconciled. So highly did the king esteem him, that in consequence of his request they were reconciled. Many other able men promoted this business as well as he; and it was so settled that Halfdan should retain the whole of his kingdom as he had it before, and should let his brother Eirik sit in peace. After this event Jorund, the skald-maid, composed some verses in *Sendibit* (The Biting Message):—

“I know that Harald Fairhair  
Knew the dark deed of Halfdan.  
To Harald Halfdan seemed  
Angry and cruel.”\*

#### CHAPTER XL.—*Birth of Hakon the Good.*

Earl Hakon Griotgardson of Lade had the whole rule over Thronthjem when King Harald was anywhere away in the country; and Hakon stood higher with the king than any in the country of Thronthjem. After Hakon's death his son Sigurd succeeded to his power in Thronthjem, and was the earl, and had his mansion at Lade. King Harald's sons, Halfdan the Black and Sigrod, who had been before in the house of his father Earl Hakon, continued to be brought up in his house. The sons of Harald and Sigurd were about the same age. Earl Sigurd was one of the wisest men of his time, and

\* Nothing is known of the poetess Jorund.

married Bergliot, a daughter of Earl Thorer the Silent; and her mother was Alof Arbot, a daughter of Harald Harfager. When King Harald began to grow old he generally dwelt on some of his great farms in Hordaland; namely, Alrekstad, or Seaheim, Fitjar, Utstein, or Augvaldsnes in the island Karmt. When Harald was seventy years of age he begat a son with a girl called Thora Mosterstang, because her family came from Moster. She was descended from good people, being connected with Horda-Kare; and was moreover a very stout and remarkably handsome girl. She was called the king's servant-girl; for at that time many were subject to service to the king who were of good birth, both men and women. Then it was the custom, with people of consideration, to choose with great care the man who should pour water over their children, and give them a name. Now when the time came that Thora, who was then at Moster, expected her confinement, she would go to King Harald, who was then living at Seaheim; and she went northwards in a ship belonging to Earl Sigurd. They lay at night close to the land; and there Thora brought forth a child upon the land, up among the rocks,\* close to the ship's gangway, and it was a man child. Earl Sigurd poured water over him, and called him Hakon, after his own father, Hakon earl of Lade. The boy soon grew handsome, large in size, and very like his father King Harald. King Harald let him follow his mother, and they were both in the king's house as long as he was an infant.

\* In this place Hakon the Good also died. See his saga, chapter 32.

CHAPTER XLI.—*King Athelstan's Message.*

At this time a king called Athelstan\* had taken the kingdom of England. He was called victorious and faithful. He sent men to Norway to King Harald, with the errand that the messengers should present him with a sword, with the hilt and handle gilt, and also the whole sheath adorned with gold and silver, and set with precious jewels. The ambassador presented the sword-hilt to the king, saying, "Here is a sword which King Athelstan sends thee, with the request that thou wilt accept it." The king took the sword by the handle; whereupon the ambassador said, "Now thou hast taken the sword according to our king's desire, and therefore art thou his subject, as thou hast taken his sword." King Harald saw now that this was a jest, for he would be subject to no man. But he remembered it was his rule, whenever anything raised his anger, to collect himself, and let his passion run off, and then take the matter into consideration coolly. Now he did so, and consulted his friends, who all gave him the advice to let the ambassadors, in the first place, go home in safety.

CHAPTER XLII.—*Hauk's Journey to England.*

The following summer King Harald sent a ship westward to England, and gave the command of it

\* King of the Anglo-Saxons, 925-941, grandson of Alfred the Great. No English chronicle tells of Hakon's fostering in England.

to Hauk Habrok.\* He was a great warrior, and very dear to the king. Into his hands he gave his son Hakon. Hauk proceeded westward to England, and found King Athelstan in London,† where there was just at the time a great feast and entertainment. When they came to the hall, Hauk told his men how they should conduct themselves; namely, that he who went first in should go last out, and all should stand in a row at the table, at equal distance from each other; and each should have his sword at his left side, but should fasten his cloak so that his sword should not be seen. Then they went into the hall, thirty in number. Hauk went up to the king and saluted him, and the king bade him welcome. Then Hauk took the child Hakon, and set it on the king's knee. The king looks at the boy, and asks Hauk what the meaning of this is. Hauk replies, "Harald the king bids thee foster his servant-girl's child." The king was in great anger, and seized a sword which lay beside him, and drew it, as if he was going to kill the child. Hauk says, "Thou hast borne him on thy knee, and thou canst murder him if thou wilt; but thou wilt not make an end of all King Harald's sons by so doing." On that Hauk went out with all his men, and took the way direct to his ship, and put to sea,—for they were ready,—and came back to King Harald. The king was highly pleased with this; for it is the common observation of all people, that the man who fosters another's

\* Habrok=High Breeches.

† Called in the sagas *Lundín* and *Lundínaborg*.



children is of less consideration than the other. From these transactions between the two kings, it appears that each wanted to be held greater than the other; but in truth there was no injury to the dignity of either, for each was the upper king in his own kingdom till his dying day.

CHAPTER XLIII.—*Hakon, the Foster-son of Athelstan, is Baptized.*

King Athelstan had Hakon baptized, and brought up in the right faith, and in good habits, and all sorts of exercises, and he loved Hakon above all his relations; and Hakon was beloved by all men. Athelstan was a man of understanding and eloquence, and also a good Christian. King Athelstan gave Hakon a sword, of which the hilt and handle were gold, and the blade still better; for with it Hakon cut down a mill-stone to the centre eye, and the sword thereafter was called the Kvernbite.\* Better sword never came into Norway, and Hakon carried it to his dying day.

CHAPTER XLIV.—*Eirik is brought to the Sovereignty.*

When King Harald was eighty years of age he became very heavy, and unable to travel through the country, or do the business of a king. Then he

\* Quern is still the name of the small hand mill-stones still found in use among the cottars in Orkney, Shetland, and the Hebrides.—L.

This sword is mentioned in the Younger Edda. There were many excellent swords in the olden time, and many of them had proper names.

brought his son Eirik to his high-seat, and gave him the power and command over the whole land. Now when King Harald's other sons heard this, King Halfdan the Black also took a king's high-seat, and took all Thronthjem land, with the consent of all the people, under his rule as upper king. After the death of Biorn the Chapman, his brother Olaf took the command over Vestfold, and took Biorn's son, Gudrod, as his foster-child. Olaf's son was called Trygve; and the two foster-brothers were about the same age, and were hopeful and clever. Trygve, especially, was remarkable as a stout and strong man. Now when the people of Viken heard that those of Hordaland had taken Eirik as upper king, they did the same, and made Olaf the upper king in Viken, which kingdom he retained. Eirik did not like this at all. Two years after this, Halfdan the Black died suddenly at a feast in Thronthjem, and the general report was that Gunhild had bribed a witch to give him a death-drink. Thereafter the Thronthjem people took Sigrod to be their king.

#### CHAPTER XLV.—*King Harald's Death.*

King Harald lived three years after he gave Eirik the supreme authority over his kingdom, and lived mostly on his great farms which he possessed, some in Rogaland, and some in Hordaland. Eirik and Gunhild had a son, on whom King Harald poured water, and gave him his own name, and the promise that he should be king after his father Eirik.

King Harald married most of his daughters within the country to his earls, and from them many great families are descended. King Harald died on a bed of sickness in Rogaland, and was buried under a mound at Hauge in Karmtsund. In Haugasund is a church, now standing; and not far from the churchyard, at the north-west side, is King Harald Harfager's mound; but his grave-stone stands west of the church, and is thirteen feet and a half high, and two ells broad. One stone was set at the head and one at the feet; on the top lay the slab, and below on both sides were laid small stones. The grave,\* mound, and stone, are there to the present day.† Harald Harfager was, according to the report of men of knowledge, of remarkably handsome appearance, great and strong, and very generous and affable to his men. He was a great warrior in his youth; and people think that this was foretold by his mother's dream before his birth, as the lowest part of the tree she dreamt of was red as blood. The stem again was green and beautiful, which betokened his flourishing kingdom; and that the tree was white at the top showed that he should reach a grey-haired old age. The branches and twigs showed forth his posterity, spread over the whole land: for of his race, ever since, Norway has always had kings.‡

\* A monument was built there in 1872, 1000 years after the battle of Hafersfjord.

† The stone and some remains of the mound are still to be seen at Gar, the principal farm-house in the parish of Karmtsund.—L.

‡ The last male descendant of Harald Fairhair that ruled in Norway, Hakon Magnuson V., died in the year 1319. There are peasants in Gudbrandsdal who claim to be descended from Harald.

CHAPTER XLVI.—*The Death of Olaf and of Sigrod.*

King Eirik took all the revenues which the king had in the middle of the country, the next winter after King Harald's decease. But Olaf took all the revenues eastward in Viken, and their brother Sigrod all that of the Thronthjem country. Eirik was very ill pleased with this; and the report went that he would attempt with force to get the sole sovereignty over the country, in the same way as his father had given it to him. Now when Olaf and Sigrod heard this, messengers passed between them; and after appointing a meeting place, Sigrod went eastward in spring to Viken, and he and his brother Olaf met at Tunsberg, and remained there a while. The same spring King Eirik levied a great force, and ships, and steered towards Viken. He got such a strong steady gale that he sailed night and day, and came faster than the news of him. When he came to Tunsberg, Olaf and Sigrod, with their forces, went out of the town a little eastward to a ridge, where they drew up their men in battle order; but as Eirik had many more men he won the battle. Both brothers, Olaf and Sigrod, fell there; and both their grave-mounds are upon the ridge where they fell. Then King Eirik went through Viken, and subdued it, and remained far into summer. Gudrod and Trygve fled to the Uplands. Eirik was a stout handsome man, strong, and very manly,—a great and fortunate man of war; but bad-minded, gruff, unfriendly, and silent. Gunhild, his wife, was the most beautiful

of women,—clever, with much knowledge, and lively ; but a very false person, and very cruel in disposition. The children of King Eirik and Gunhild were, Gamle, the oldest ; then Guthorm, Harald, Ragnfrod, Ragnhild, Erling, Gudrod, and Sigurd Sleva. All were handsome, and of manly appearance.\*

\* Of Eirik, his wife, and children, see the following sagas.

END OF VOL. I.











